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Christmas Candles

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MARIE TELLS THE STORY
The Babushka, Page 209

CHRISTMAS CANDLES

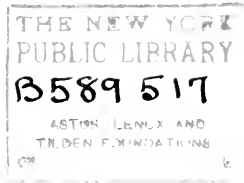
Plays for Boys and Girls

BY

ELSIE HOBART CARTER



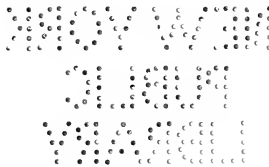
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To the memory of
W. N. H.
who loved both plays
and players

[illegible]

Thanks are due to The Century Company; Mr. Tudor Jenks; Miss K. A. Prichard; Mrs. Mary Wilkins Freeman; the Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company; Colonel Thomas E. Davis; Miss Gertrude Hall; Harper & Brothers; the John Church Company; and the Universalist Publishing House, for permission to use copyrighted material, as particularly acknowledged throughout the book.

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<p>Seventeen characters: Two, the mother and St. Nicholas, played by adults; seven boys and four girls from six to twelve years; four boys, or three boys and a girl, fourteen to eighteen. Important parts fall to three of the younger children, two boys and one girl, and the Star-Child must be able to sing alone.</p> <p>Setting: 1st. Snow-scene in forest. 2nd. Interior,—a poor hovel.</p> <p>Time of playing: 40 minutes.</p> <p>This play makes use of the old German belief that the Christ-Child returns to earth each Christmas Eve to seek shelter among men. A little waif, lost in the snow, is refused help by the selfishness of happiness, of ill-temper, of poverty, of riches, and is at last received by two little children who take him for the Holy Child indeed.</p>	
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the little brothers and sisters do not love an impatient and unkind older one. Much grieved, she tries through the year to correct her faults, but is almost afraid to repeat the experiment when the Elves again bring their gift. The friendly Elves urge her, and the result is so happy that Toinette and the Elves have a gay little celebration all by themselves.

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Nine characters: One adult, for Santa Claus; four boys and four girls from six to fifteen years. Chief part by a boy of eight or nine.

Setting: One simple interior.

Time of playing: 25 minutes.

Tom, hearing that Santa Claus will bring sticks or ashes to children who are bad, can think of no way to test the disturbing statement, except to be as naughty as he knows how. But Santa Claus explains matters.

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Setting: 1st. A winter street-scene.

2nd. Simple interior.

Time of playing: 35 minutes.

Dick and Dot, a lonely little brother and sister, decide to share their Christmas with two poor children, while several older friends, hearing the children's wish for a Christmas Party, plan, independently of each other, to arrange for one. The result is a Christmas surprise for everyone.

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Setting: Simple interior.

Time of playing: 40 minutes.

Santa Claus' Brownie allows Ted to help fill the stockings, with a result that perplexes and disturbs their owners, and teaches Ted that it takes thoughtfulness as well as good will to make people happy. The Brownie's especial gift to Ted is a Christmas Dream.

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Twenty characters: Seven boys and four girls, from five to twelve years; the mother, and other adult Colonists, taken by boys and girls from seventeen to twenty.

Setting: One interior, a small cabin in the early days of the Colonies.

Time of playing: 45 minutes.

The little Puritan family, hearing from their young mother of happy Christmas in Old England, decide on a celebration of their own. The Colonists, surprising them, are very angry, and inclined to severe punishment, until a little Indian boy, who has been befriended by Mistress Delight and her children, shows that, for the sake of her kindness to him, the settlement has been spared a dreaded Indian raid. The peace and good will of

Christmas touch the stern hearts of the Puritans, and they end by a friendly sharing of the festival.

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Twenty-five characters, all but two with speaking parts. Two may double. One adult for the Abbot. Eight older boys, four older girls. Seven boys, five girls, from five to ten years.

Setting: 1st. Roadway, outside the Convent walls.

2nd. The Christmas garden.

3rd. Chapel of the Convent.

Time of playing: 50 minutes.

It is unknown to many people that the Christmas toys grow from seed in the garden of the Christmas Monks. The play relates the adventures of the Prince, Peter, and Peter's little sister, in this wonderful place.

VIII. THE SPELL OF CHRISTMAS. *In Two Scenes* 179

Fourteen characters: Eight boys and six girls, from six to sixteen years. Also a few voices for the singing of the Waits' carol off stage.

Setting: Two scenes—Seventeenth Century interiors.

Time of playing: 45 minutes.

The old belief that at midnight on Christmas Eve the family portraits come to life, step down from their places, and join hands in a stately dance, leads the children to slip out of their beds at an unwonted hour, and so to take a hand in the adventures of their elders, quite beyond their ken.

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Twenty-four characters: One adult, or older girl, able to bring intelligence and sympathy to the part of the mysterious Babushka; two men, or older boys; five boys and four girls, from six to fourteen; and village children, five boys, seven girls. One of the men and one boy, the village fiddlers, should be able to play their violins to accompany the carol.

Setting: Interior,—a Russian hovel.

Time of playing: 30 minutes.

Tells the story of the strange old woman, who, refusing at the Wise Men's call to follow the Star to the manger of the new-born Christ, has ever since in the winter season wandered over the world, seeking in every nursery, in every cradle, for the Holy Child.

X. A CANVAS CHRISTMAS. *In Two Acts. For a Boys' Club* 235

Fourteen characters: Twelve boys, twelve to sixteen; two little boys, six and eight.

Setting: One scene, interior of a circus tent.

Time of playing: 40 minutes.

Two little farm boys who have never seen either a circus or a Christmas tree, creep into the tent just as the discontented men are planning rebellion against their leader. The Christmas spirit of friendliness softens not only the men, but the surly ringmaster, and the strict and severe father of the boys.

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<p>Seven characters: Three adults, two men, one woman; four children, three girls, and one boy, six to ten years. The important part of the pickaninny taken by a girl of ten.</p> <p>Setting: Modern interior. Time of playing: 25 minutes.</p> <p>Minty-Malviny, the little black drudge of an old-time New Orleans boarding-house, falls asleep on the rug of a handsome sitting-room, and waking, takes the owner for Ole Marse Santa Claus himself. Her faith inspires him to play the part.</p>	
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<p>Six characters: Five women, one little girl of eight or nine, who must be able to carry an important part.</p> <p>Setting: Mrs. Darling's dressing-room. Time of playing: 50 minutes.</p> <p>Mrs. Darling, a charming young widow with a quick temper, has dressed a hundred dolls for an Orphan Asylum. On Christmas Eve, Sally, the kitchen-maid, brings a little East-side friend to see the dolls, one of which is accidentally broken, to the consternation of the household. But Mrs. Darling is not the ogress the servants believe her, and Tibby goes home happy, with her arms full of dollies.</p>	
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SUGGESTIONS FOR PRODUCTION

These little plays were written for the classes and clubs of a small Sunday-school, where the Christmas celebration consisted of a play to introduce Santa Claus and a Christmas-tree. They are equally suitable for children at home or in day schools, and they have been so used.

In most of the plays children greatly enjoy playing the adult parts and do good work in them. But several of the adult rôles call for adult players, because a deeper appreciation of the feeling contained in the story is required than can be given by girls in their teens. Such parts are the Babushka, the Mother in "The Christ-Candle," and the Mother in "Toinette." Partly for the same reason, a man should be chosen for the Abbot in "The Christmas Monks," but also his presence will lend dignity, and much greater orderliness to rehearsals in a play with a large cast.

The last two plays, adapted from stories by well-known writers, "Minty-Malviny's Santa Claus" and "The Hundred," were not especially intended for children, but as parlor plays for home production. These two throw heavier work upon a single child than any of the other plays, but though they were made with special children in view, it would not be difficult to find, in any group of children, a little girl who could play "Minty" or "Tibbie" as well as those for whom the parts were first made.

The length of the cast in some of the plays need

not be daunting, as the principal characters are usually few, the minor ones often having been introduced in answer to the frequent pleading "May *I* be in the 'show' this year?" Though some of the parts are rather long, none are in the least calculated to strain the actors in any way—children act them with zest and absolute naturalness. Very little children have sometimes done remarkable work in them—the very youngest, a tiny girl of four, cast for "Rosalia" in "The Christmas Monks," played also another part at twenty-four hours' notice, when a little cousin inopportunately came down with measles on Christmas Eve. The two children had studied together, and little "Rosalia" knew "Peggy's" part as well as her own.

LIGHTING. No one factor is more important for success in producing children's plays than adequate lighting. No matter how charmingly the setting and costuming may be carried out, no matter how well the children may act their parts, if the audience cannot *see* them easily, the pains and trouble of the stage force, the best efforts of the children, will be lost. This is an individual problem, each case varying so much from the next that definite directions to fit all cases cannot well be given. But the importance of this one factor can hardly be overestimated. Fortunate indeed is the miniature stage with footlights and upper lights so arranged that red and white bulbs are controlled by different switches, each switch having also a dimmer. Nor are these things so expensive as to be beyond even rather moderate means, especially if included in the original equipment of the stage. It is more often from lack of experience than because of their initial cost that they are omitted.

STAGE SETTINGS. Through the same lack of experi-

ence or forethought, settings are often provided which are of use in the minimum instead of the maximum number of plays. The simplest cottage interior is more adaptable, and can be used in a greater number of instances than the most attractive of more pronounced "sets." It is therefore invaluable for a small stage, where perhaps but one indoor and one outdoor scene must cover all requirements. All but two of the plays in this volume have been acted upon such a little stage.

DELAYS. Another point of real importance is to avoid delays. The director should make every effort to this end by attention to the smallest details beforehand, by preparedness when the time of performance comes, and by perfect control of the stage forces. Lateness in beginning, and long waits between scenes, are tedious to any audience. They do much to dampen enthusiasm and destroy otherwise happy impressions. Care and forethought, practice for those who are to handle scenery, and system in the arrangement of properties and costumes will go a long way towards the elimination of this difficulty.

COSTUMES AND PROPERTIES. In giving stage directions and descriptions of costumes, the effort has been towards suggestiveness rather than too great definiteness, and strict adherence to all details is not necessary or intended. It is most important to keep the Christmas spirit of the play from being smothered in the mechanics of production. Setting and costuming may be elaborate or simple, and every director will know his or her own resources. Groups of people interested in such work are apt to accumulate sets of costumes, odd properties, even pieces of furniture, which are convertible to many other uses than those for which they were made. Few things

are really impossible to compass if one is set upon them. A friendly janitor will spend his leisure upon stage-carpentry. Friends rise up—or may be sought—who are interested enough to lend their treasures, or to use their talents. One will draw a latticed window which may be pinned or basted upon a bit of plain wall; another will manufacture a scutcheon for the decoration of a medieval hall, or even paint a sea scene before which Alice, the Gryphon, and the Mock-Turtle may disport themselves.

MATERIALS. Gifts of old silk gowns, or even scraps of material, can all be utilized in some way. And in this connection, a word must be said as to the value of *real* things. Use cheese-cloth, cambric, and canton-flannel if you must—a good variety of color may be found in them; canton-flannel is heavy, and hangs well, and up to a certain point they are all effective. But if better things can be had, through gift or loan, it is a matter for rejoicing. Not only because better materials mean softer and richer colors, but because they very greatly improve the *texture* of the stage picture. This difference in quality makes a very marked difference in beauty of effect.

Occasionally it will be found necessary to hire costumes, and, more often, wigs. But all such things as can be made, with help, by the children and their friends, will add just so much to their interest in the performance, and the good they can get from it.

MAKE-UP. For plays produced under artificial light, some "make-up" must be used, as otherwise faces are often pale to ghastliness. But for children it should be put on with a very careful and sparing hand, and except in certain character-parts, only a little dry rouge is needed.

REHEARSING. Children's plays should not be over-rehearsed. The smoothness and finish which it is right to demand of older players is hardly possible, or even desirable, for them. The charm of their acting lies in its sweet simplicity and freshness, a part of which is almost sure to be lost in any attempt at professional perfection. When they weary of rehearsals, and lose their enjoyment of them, not only are the director's troubles multiplied, but something vital has been lost from the charm of the final performance.

As a preliminary to rehearsals the children should be brought together and the cast read to them, so that each child may know just which part he or she is to act, and the play then read to them by someone thoroughly in sympathy both with its story and with the children themselves. In this way they most quickly catch the spirit of the play, and are at once full of interest and ready with their own suggestions. Then the parts may be given out, and the play read again, each child reading his or her own part. Mistakes of pronunciation and emphasis are thus guarded against, and the children are ready to begin learning their parts. In the case of school plays, where the whole group can meet daily, more than one such preliminary reading and discussion should be held.

If it is a possible thing, rehearse from the beginning on the stage where the play is to be given, having scenery arranged and properties of some sort on hand, in order that lines and action may be impressed on the children's minds together, not learned as distinct and separate things. Put into practice early whatever music is to be used.

Finally, don't let the rehearsals at any time descend to the level of mere *drill*. The director must enjoy them

with the children, establishing a happy co-operation which makes the whole work a joy from beginning to end. They will share the spirit of adventure in the matter of obtaining or contriving the most difficult things in the way of costumes, scenery, and properties. Their inventive-ness will be quickened, their hands will grow skillful, and their triumphant enjoyment of success in these preliminary labors will stimulate them to greater success in the acting of the story. In this, they will be quick to appreciate hints—frequently to offer them—as to the best ways of expressing the meaning and spirit of the play, and work with them becomes an inspiration to all alike.

With such whole-hearted co-operation, nothing is impossible of attainment, and the pleasure of the work more than repays ungrudging lavishment of time, labor, patience, and love.

THE CHRIST-CANDLE

A CHRISTMAS PLAY IN TWO SCENES

CHARACTERS

MOTHER MADELON } Who live in the little black hut
HANS } in the woods.
GRETEL }
FRIEDEL, whom the Christ-Child sent.

OLD MARTA }
RICH JOHANN } Who would not share their Christmas.
CROSS JACOB }
WOODCUTTER }

THE STAR CHILD, who brought a Christmas message.

FRITZ }
HEINRICH } To whom the good St. Nicholas always
OSCAR } comes.
KARL }
JAN }
BARBARA }
KATRINA }

THE GOOD ST. NICHOLAS.



HANS AND GRETEL

THE CHRIST-CANDLE

SCENE I

*Christmas Eve, in the forest near MOTHER MADELON'S cottage. The ground is covered with snow and the little evergreens all about are weighted down with it. Enter FRITZ (L.) with his brothers and sisters, laden with holly boughs and evergreens. The boys drag a sled with a small evergreen tree on it. As they come they sing "Softly the Echoes Come and Go."**

FRITZ. Stop here and rest, Heinrich. This is too big a load for the little ones.

BARBARA. Yes, Karl is all out of breath, and little Jan can hardly keep up.

HEINRICH [*dropping the sled rope*]. I'm not tired. I'm going to run back to the holly trees to get a few more sprays. [*Exit.*]

OSCAR [*who has been measuring the tree with his arm.*] Fritz, do you think the good St. Nicholas can cover such a big tree as this?

KARL. It's pretty big. It's bigger than me—or Katrina—I guess it's bigger than Fritz or Barbara or Heinrich.

KATRINA. I think it's bigger than the one St. Nicholas filled for us last year.

* *Hosanna*, p. 122. New Church Board of Publication, 3 West 29th St., New York.

JAN. But then, you see, we are bigger children than we were last year.

FRITZ. But the tree is almost big enough to hold you on the top branches, kleiner Bruder, if the good St. Nicholas wanted to put you there. See! [*He and BARBARA help JAN on top of the load. Enter HEINRICH excitedly.*]

HEINRICH. Fritz, Fritz! And, Barbara, and all of you! Listen to what I've seen. I was running over to the holly trees, you know, when I tripped on a bit of grape-vine, and rolled over in the snow. [*Brushes snow from his clothes.*] And when I sat up there was the queerest little black cottage right there. I do believe it just came up out of the ground like a house in a fairy-book.

FRITZ. Oh no, it didn't, Heinrich, it's always been there! I've seen it many a time.

HEINRICH. I don't believe it! Why didn't I ever see it then?

BARBARA. Oh, never mind that! Tell us some more about the house.

HEINRICH. I crept up, and looked in at the window, for, of course, I thought there might be brownies, or, gnomes, or kobolds there, and I saw——

CHILDREN [*breathlessly*]. What? Oh, what?

HEINRICH. A poor woman and two little children——

CHILDREN [*disappointed*]. O-o-h!

FRITZ. That all?

HEINRICH. Just wait! They looked so poor and hungry—there wasn't a thing on the table but a dry little loaf of bread—and only a few little sticks on the fire.

KATRINA. Oh, it makes me so sorry.

HEINRICH [*shaking his head wisely*]. That's not the worst of it. When I got to the window the two children were standing by the mother's chair, looking up in her face and asking her something. I couldn't hear what they said, but she shook her head oh, so sadly, and said: "No, my little ones, the good St. Nicholas will not find his way to us this Christmas." That's what she said! [*Silent consternation.*]

FRITZ. What? What did you say, Heinrich?

BARBARA. It couldn't be so!

KARL. St. Nicholas!

OSCAR. Not find his way everywhere!

KATRINA. Not give them any beautiful Tannenbaum!

FRITZ. Oh, I don't believe it! You didn't hear right!

HEINRICH. I did. And I do believe it! You would if you had seen how sorry they looked.

FRITZ. Well, but—well, I don't see—well, Heinrich, it isn't so hard to find. He *must* come surely.

HEINRICH. No, he isn't coming. The poor woman said so and she must know. [*Sitting down on sled.*]

BARBARA. Yes, she must know. Father and Mother always see the good saint first, you know, and tell him whether we've been naughty or good. They always know whether he is coming or not.

KATRINA. But he always *does* come to us.

OSCAR. Brother Fritz, Mother says the good St. Nicholas loves to give presents to little children. Wouldn't he be sorry if there was a house anywhere in the *world* that he didn't know about?

KARL. Brother Fritz, couldn't *we* show him the way?

FRITZ [*claps him on the shoulder*]. Well spoken, Karl, my man. We'll tell St. Nicholas all about it as

soon as he comes to us, and then show him the way to Heinrich's little black hut.

BARBARA. And if he shouldn't have enough to go around, he always brings us so much that we can spare some of our things for them.

FRITZ. Yes, he puts enough for two trees on our tree. Come, Oscar and Karl, get hold of the rope! Barbara, you take Katrina's hand.

BARBARA. Trot along in front, Jan! Come, then, let's get home as fast as we can.

HEINRICH. All together now! Get up, horses, pull the load home! [*Exeunt (R.), singing as before. Enter FRIEDEL (L.), before the sound of their voices has died away, slowly and wearily. Limp to side and peers through the trees after the children, then to the back, then to the left again, like one who has lost his way. Stops in the center looking doubtfully after the children once more. Enter the woodcutter (L.), axe over his shoulder, whistling as he hurries home. FRIEDEL silently holds out his cap, but the man shrugs his shoulders, shakes his head, and passes on. FRIEDEL goes slowly to a tree and sits on a log or mound beside it. Blows on his fingers, tries to pull his rags more closely around him, and leans his head dejectedly on his hands. Lifts his head suddenly to watch MARTA, who approaches (L.), hobbling under a bunch of fagots.*]

MARTA. Ach, my old bones! Ach, this heavy bundle! Will ever old Marta get home?

[*FRIEDEL silently holds out his cap.*

MARTA. What's this! What's this! What's this! Was ever heard tell of such insolence? As if Old Marta wasn't poor enough herself, without giving to every beggar who chooses to ask! The little good-for-nothing

sees how I stagger under my own load and yet asks me to help him! [*Moves on.*]

FRIEDEL [*softly*]. I would help you carry them.

MARTA [*pausing*]. Help me! Help me! and lose half the sticks I have worked so hard to gather on the way! [*Goes on.*] Help me, he says. When I want help I'll not ask the beggars that come out of the streets of the town just a purpose to lie in wait for a poor old crone like me. [*Exit (R.) mumbling.*] That I'll not! That I'll not.

FRIEDEL [*looking after her*]. Why does she think I would drop the sticks? I would be so careful. I wonder why. I almost think she was afraid of me. Of me!

[*Enter CROSS JACOB (L.)*].

FRIEDEL [*timidly*]. Please—please, sir, could you tell me the way back to the town? And oh, couldn't you let me come to your fire a little while to warm myself?

CROSS JACOB. Go away with you! It's as much as ever my wife will do to let me warm myself at my fire. She's got nine boys of her own to fill up my house and drive me away. Get away with you! [*Shakes his fist threateningly. FRIEDEL recoils.*] Go home to your own fire! [*Exit (R.)*].

FRIEDEL. Oh, if I only had one!

[*Enter RICH JOHANN (L.). Pauses to light his pipe.*]

FRIEDEL [*speaking timidly and hurriedly*]. Oh, sir! Oh, good, kind sir! don't you want a little boy to help you in your house?

JOHANN [*looks him over*]. What's your name, boy?

FRIEDEL. Friedel, sir!

JOHANN. Friedel what!

FRIEDEL. Just Friedel, sir!

JOHANN. Umph! "Just Friedel." And who's Friedel, I'd like to know.

FRIEDEL. I don't think I just know myself, sir! But, oh, sir! [*clasps his hands tightly*], please let me work for you. I would pick up wood for you, and build fires, and run errands. I would work so hard and be so faithful!

JOHANN [*throwing back his shoulders and putting his hands in his pockets*]. And who do you think I am, boy, that you presume to want to work in my house? To work for me, Rich Johann, who has many servants in his house, to carry out his commands and do his work and run his errands? Umph! Do you think I could have one servant about me clothed in such rags as yours? [*FRIEDEL hangs his head.*] No, no! my servants wear fine clothes and brass buttons [*takes a puff at his pipe*], yes, indeed, brass buttons. No, no! Rich Johann lives in a very different style—a very different style, indeed. [*Exit (R.), his nose very much in the air.*]

FRIEDEL. Nobody will take me in. I have walked so far, so far, I can't go back to the town. [*Throws himself down on mound (R. Center).*] The snow feels almost warm, the wind is so cold. [*Points up.*] I can see a star up there through the trees. It twinkles and twinkles as if it was laughing. I do believe it is! Sometimes I think the stars must be children with little candles in their hands. I wish I could see—I wish—— [*He falls back asleep. Enter the little STAR CHILD (back Center) from behind the fir trees. Sings.*]

THE CHRIST CHILD*

Andante espressivo.

WM. TAUBERT.

p

O-ver all the starlight clear, While the world is sleeping,

p

This system contains the first four measures of the piece. It features a vocal melody in the upper staff and piano accompaniment in the lower staves. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Andante espressivo'.

Sits the Christ Child ev-er dear, Night - ly watch is keep - ing.

This system contains measures 5 through 8. The vocal melody continues, and the piano accompaniment provides harmonic support. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

p

Safe the star-ry host He tends, As his sheepfold shin - ing,

pp

This system contains measures 9 through 12, concluding the piece. The vocal melody ends with a final note, and the piano accompaniment provides a concluding harmonic structure. The dynamic markings *p* and *pp* are used.

* From *The Nursery*, Vol. 27 (1880).

THE CHRIST-CANDLE

cres. *p*

Cares for us and slumber sends, All to rest re - sign - ing,

Sweetly sleep then, do not fear; Look with love be - fore thee,

From the gold - en star-light clear, Bends the Christ Child

o'er thee, Bends the Christ Child o'er thee.

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system is a vocal line on a single staff with a treble clef, containing the lyrics "o'er thee, Bends the Christ Child o'er thee." The second and third systems are piano accompaniment for a grand piano, with a treble staff and a bass staff. The piano part features arpeggiated chords and sustained notes, with some measures containing whole rests.

[Exit backwards slowly. FRIEDEL suddenly raises himself, stretching out his hand after her.]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Christmas Eve in MOTHER MADELON's cottage. Open fireplace at the Right, door (R.) and window (L.) at the back. Snow scene at back, shows through window and door when opened. Small table by the window with half a loaf of bread and one or two cracked plates and cups. A stool, a small chair, and by the fire a box. MOTHER MADELON sits (L.) at a spinning wheel. The children stand beside her, GRETEL rubbing her eyes with her two little fists, HANS with his hands behind him.*

HANS [*bravely*]. But, Mother, the good saint never missed us before. Are you sure he isn't coming?

GRETEL. What makes you so sure, Mother, dear?

MOTHER. Yes, my little ones, I am afraid it is true. [*More brightly.*] You know, he has so very much to do. Just think how many little children he must go to see every year! Someone must always be left out. Perhaps it is our turn now. We can wait until next year. Perhaps he will come then.

HANS [*rubbing his eyes*]. Oh, dear, I wish to-morrow wouldn't come at all.

MOTHER. Oh, Hans, don't say that. Think how happy we can be. Even if St. Nicholas doesn't come, to-morrow is still the bright, beautiful Christmas Day, when everyone in the world is happy, and we shall hear the chimes ringing, and see people going about wishing each other "Merry Christmas." And then we have each

* See note on Fireplace, p. 313.

other. I have my little big daughter who helps me wipe the dishes and put the plates away and my big right-hand man who is going to work so hard for me pretty soon.

HANS. Yes, Mother, but I can help you now, right away. Let me do something for you right now!

GRETTEL. Me too, Mother, me too!

MOTHER. Very well! You shall hold this yarn for me, while Gretel winds it. [*Puts the yarn on HANS' hands. HANS sits on box, GRETTEL on stool winding. MOTHER turns spinning wheel and sings "Bending O'er a Cradle Low."*]

BENDING O'ER A CRADLE LOW*

(A CHRISTMAS SONG)

LYDIA AVERY COONLEY.

GEORGE F. ROOT.

Not too slow.

1. Bend - ing o'er a cra - dle low Sang a

moth - er long a - go, "This is Christ the

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THE CHRIST-CANDLE

rit.

Ho - ly Child." Shepherds, wise men, an-gels smiled ;

a tempo.

mf "What care I for pal-ace walls ; What care I for

m king - ly halls ! In my arms the King of kings

mp List - ens while the an - gel sings. Peace on *m*

earth, good will for aye, Hail the bless - ed

Christ-mas Day! Hail the bless - ed Christ - mas Day!

2. Echoing down the ages long
 Comes the herald angel's song,
 Still do shepherds heed the voice,
 Wise men listen and rejoice;
 While to greet the King of kings
 Earth her noblest offerings brings.
 And the blessed Christ is born
 In each heart on Christmas morn.
 Sing, then, peace, good will for aye,
 Hail the blessed Christmas Day!
 Hail the blessed Christmas Day!

HANS. Gretel, I believe St. Nicholas *will* come any-
 way, I just believe he will. [GRETEL *gives the yarn to*
her mother, HANS remains sitting on the box.] When
 we aren't thinking about it he'll just walk right in—I'll
 show you how. [*Jumps up and runs out of the door.*]
 Now, I'm St. Nicholas. [*Comes in again, speaking in*

a loud and pompous tone.] How do you do, little Miss Gretel,—how are you little—no, big Hans! [*Shakes hands with GRETEL and with an imaginary HANS.*] Well, Mother Madelon, have these children been very good indeed?

MOTHER. Yes, good saint, I couldn't ask for two better, dearer children, or any that I love half so well.

HANS [*in his own voice*]. Oh, Mother, do you truly think so?

GRETEL. Then, Hans, if we've been good children, I 'most *know* St. Nicholas will come.

HANS [*dancing to look out of door*]. Oh, he will! He will! Mother, give me something to do so I won't keep thinking about it.

GRETEL. Oh, Hans, let's have a story!

HANS. Oh, yes, Mother, please tell us a story.

MOTHER. Bring your little stools, then I will tell you a Christmas story.

GRETEL [*coaxingly*]. Mother, don't you think it is too dark to spin? Let me sit in your lap.

MOTHER. You funny little fairy! [*Takes her on her lap. HANS brings a stool and sits at his MOTHER'S feet nursing his knee.*]

MOTHER. Once upon a time, many, many years ago, it happened that a little child was wandering all alone through the streets of a great busy town. It was Christmas Eve, and wherever the child looked he saw shining lights and hurrying happy people. His coat was all too thin, and his little feet and hands were bare and frost-bitten. The sharp ice on the ground cut his feet as he walked, and the cold wind tossed his soft hair back from his forehead. But he hardly seemed to feel the cold, for everywhere he was watching the eager, happy faces that

hastened by. He looked up into a window and saw a beautiful, wonderful tree, covered with little candles and glittering balls, and all about the tree were gathered merry, laughing children. It seemed as if those happy little ones would be glad to have another little boy amongst them, and the child went quietly up the steps and tapped at the door. But the tall man who opened it said crossly, "Go away. I can't let you in here." So the child went sorrowfully down the steps and wandered on again. As he went along the street many more houses were full of light and happiness, and wherever he saw the candle-covered Christmas trees with their cluster of gay child-faces, he tapped softly at the door, or looked wistfully in at the window. But everywhere the same answer was given him. "You must go on. We can't take you in." Some people looked sorry when they said this, but most of them hardly glanced at him at all before they shut the great doors to keep out the cold wind. At last he came to the very last house—a poor little cottage with just one window. But he could see the light streaming out of it, and wearily made his way to the door. In this little house was a Mother and two little children——

HANS. Just like us!

MOTHER. And at one side of the room was a cradle——

GRETEL. But we haven't got any baby!

MOTHER. When the little girl heard the soft tapping at the door she said: "Shall I open it, Mother?" And the mother said, "Yes, indeed, we musn't let anyone stay out in the cold on the beautiful Christmas Eve." So the child opened the door and led in the little, shivering stranger. The mother took him on her lap and rubbed his frozen hands, and folded her warm arms about

him. And the children begged him to stay with them always. Then the Mother told them the wonderful beautiful story of the first Christmas, and how the shining angels came to the poor shepherds in the field and sang "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." And how the shepherds went to find the dear baby in the manger, and the wise men were led by a glorious star to find Him, too. And while she was talking to them the room seemed filled with a strange, soft light that grew lovelier and brighter every moment, until the children, wondering, turned to their mother to ask what it meant. And then they saw that the Child was gone. But the mother said: "Children, I think we have had the real little Christ-Child with us to-night." And after that men used to say that the Christ-Child sometimes came again on Christmas Eve to wander from door to door asking for shelter and love. And sometimes men drive Him away, and He can find no place to rest. But in some homes He is given a glad and loving welcome.

GRETEL. Oh, Mother, I wish, I *wish* He would come here, to us!

HANS [*looking to the window*]. But, Mother, it is all dark—there is no light in the window for Him! Mother, we've got a little piece of a candle. Mayn't I put it in the cup that's broken and light it?

MOTHER. Yes, my little son.

[HANS *jumps on the box and reaches a bit of candle from the mantel. Fastens it in the cup and lights it. GRETEL watching anxiously. Then together they put it in the window and sing "The Christ-Candle."*

THE CHRIST - CANDLE*

KATE L. BROWN.

ELIZABETH U. EMERSON.

First system of piano introduction. Treble and bass staves in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The music features chords and eighth-note patterns. A *Marcato.* instruction is written below the first measure of the bass staff.

Second system of piano introduction, continuing the musical themes from the first system. It includes a *rit.* (ritardando) instruction in the fourth measure of the bass staff.

SOLO. *Allegro moderato.*

Third system of music, featuring a vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is on a single staff, and the piano accompaniment is on two staves. The tempo is marked *Allegro moderato.*

1. Lit - tle ta - per set to - night, Throw a - far thy

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THE CHRIST-CANDLE

ti - ny light, Up and down the darksome street, Guide the tender

The first system of the musical score for 'The Christ-Candle'. It features a vocal melody in the upper staff and piano accompaniment in the lower staves. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics 'ti - ny light, Up and down the darksome street, Guide the tender' are written below the vocal staff.

wand'ring feet Of the dar - ling Christ Child sweet.

The second system of the musical score. It continues the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The lyrics 'wand'ring feet Of the dar - ling Christ Child sweet.' are written below the vocal staff. The system concludes with a double bar line.

2. He is coming through the snow
As He came so long ago,
When the stars set o'er the hill,
When the town is dark and still,
Comes to do the Father's will.
3. Little taper, spread thy ray
Make His pathway light as day,
Let some door be open wide
For this guest of Christmas-tide,
Dearer than all else beside.
4. Little Christ Child come to me,
Let my heart Thy shelter be.

Such a home Thou wilt not scorn,
So the bells of Christmas morn
Glad shall ring, "A Christ is born."

NOTE: The air "Hearts and Flowers" can also be used for this song.

GRETEL. Oh, do you think the little Christ-Child can see it now, Mother?

MOTHER. Yes, my darling. He can. And whether He comes wandering through the snowy forests or not, He loves to know that little children think of Him and try to please Him.

HANS. Gretel, I'm going out to see if the light shows outside. [*Goes out of the door and peers in at the window. GRETEL keeps the door open a crack to watch him.*]

HANS [*comes in and bends over the fire to warm his hands*]. It sparkles on the snow just the way the moonlight does, and it's ever so much brighter than the stars. Do you believe it is as bright as the star of Bethlehem?

GRETEL. Oh no! It couldn't be like that! There was never another star that shone like *that*.

HANS. Let me put another stick on the fire, Mother. If the little Christ-Child comes He will be so cold. [*Puts on one or two sticks.*]

GRETEL. Oh, Hans, I'm afraid He will be hungry, too. Let's toast a piece of our loaf for Him.

HANS. Yes, let me toast it.

GRETEL. And I'll cut it. [*Both clatter to the table, where GRETEL cuts a piece of bread, and fastening it on a stick gives it to HANS, who seats himself on a stool before the fire. GRETEL stands beside him. FRIEDEL appears at the window and leans his face against it, watching.*]

GRETEL. Oh, Hans, be careful, be careful, you're burning it!

HANS. No, I'm not, but I'm toasting my face.

GRETEL. Let me hold it awhile. [*They change places. HANS stands with hands on hips and feet apart watching her. The MOTHER sees FRIEDEL and rises, beckoning to him. FRIEDEL leaves the window, and goes to the door, where he taps softly.*]

GRETEL. Oh, Hans! He's come! He's come! [*GRETEL drops fork and both fly to the door, throwing it wide open, and standing back. An instant's pause, then FRIEDEL looks from one to the other and stretches out his hands.*]

GRETEL [*shyly taking his hand*]. We—we—we were waiting for you. Come in.

HANS. We're glad you've come.

GRETEL. Mother. Mother, his hands are like ice. [*Leads him to the fire. HANS shuts the door and comes to watch. The MOTHER comes forward.*]

MOTHER. Sit here, little one, and let me warm the poor cold hands. [*Seats FRIEDEL on a stool close to the fire, and bending over him chafes his hands. HANS and GRETEL draw away, casting furtive glances at him.*]

HANS. Do you believe it is the Christ-Child, Gretel?

GRETEL [*slowly*]. I—I don't know.

HANS [*decidedly*]. I do. It *must* be. We put the candle there for Him—and then He came. And you made toast for Him—where is His toast, Gretel?

GRETEL. Oh, Hans! I *dropped* it when I went to the door!

HANS [*hurries to pick it up*]. Never mind. It didn't hurt it a bit.

GRETEL [*takes it and brushes it*]. He won't care.

Mother's hearth isn't a bit dusty. [*Both go to FRIEDEL.*]

GRETEL [*timidly offering him the toast*]. Hans and I thought you would be hungry, and so we made you some toast.

FRIEDEL. Oh, I am, I am. [*Takes a bite and turns to them.*] I haven't had anything to eat since—since—Oh, I can't remember! When was it? [*Puts his hand to his head.*]

MOTHER [*drawing him gently to lean against her*]. There, never mind. Eat now.

[GRETEL and HANS draw away again.]

HANS. Are you *sure* it is the Christ-Child, Gretel?

GRETEL. I don't know. But I think—I think if it was, His face would be all shining.

MOTHER. Where is your home, my son? And what is your name? Why were you wandering all alone this bitter night?

FRIEDEL. I am Friedel. Just Friedel. Not anything else. And I haven't any home. I wish I had. A home is what I was looking for. I thought perhaps someone would take me in, and let me work to pay for keeping me. But nobody wants a boy, somehow, nobody. [*Drops his head in his hands.*]

MOTHER [*stroking his head*]. You shall never say that again, my son. While we have still our little hut, you shall live with us, and be an elder brother to my little ones.

HANS. You hear that, Gretel? It isn't the Christ-Child, after all. [*Rubs his fists in his eyes.*]

GRETEL. Oh, but Hans, I believe the Christ-Child would like this almost as much. I mean He would like our putting the candle in the window, and making the toast and everything for this poor little boy, almost as

THE CHRIST-CANDLE

much as if it was really for Him. Because it's His little boy, you know. *[The chimes begin.]*

HANS. Really and truly?

GRETEL. Yes, I'm *sure!* Perhaps the Christ-Child sent him to us. Oh, Hans, listen! The chimes are beginning to ring. *[Both run to the window to listen. After a moment voices in the distance begin singing "Oh, Happy Night."]*

OH, HAPPY NIGHT*

Words by M. E. B.

Music written for "Wide Awake"
By LOUIS C. ELSON.

1. Oh, happy night! that brings the morn To dawn a-bove the
2. Oh, happy star! whose radiance sweet Did guide the wise men's

(Midnight bells)

Lord new-born, And bids the an-gels sing a-gain Their
eag-er feet, To seek the way un-known, un-tried, That

* Courtesy of Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company.

message to the sons of men, We hail thee! We hail thee!
led them to the manger's side, We hail thee! We hail thee!

The musical score is written for a single voice and piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The piano accompaniment is written for both treble and bass staves. The score includes dynamic markings: *ff* (fortissimo) and *pp* (pianissimo), and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

3. Oh, happy manger! that hath known
This precious burden as thine own,
Beyond all gifts the world doth hold
Of pomp and pow'r and gems and gold,
We hail thee! We hail thee!

4. Oh, happy day! that gave to men
The Babe Divine of Bethlehem,
The King of Kings the undefiled
In semblance of a little child,
We hail thee! We hail thee!

5. Oh, happy Babe! whose wondrous eyes
Still hold the light of Paradise,
Look down in blessing from above
While, Prince of Peace and Lord of Love,
We hail thee! We hail thee!

(Sung by a single voice, several joining in at "We hail thee!")

GRETEL [*at the end of the first verse*]. Oh, Mother dear, do you hear the singing?

[*Another verse is sung.*]

FRIEDEL [*wonderingly*]. What is it? Angels?

[*At the end of the song FRITZ and others are seen passing the window. HANS and GRETEL rush to their MOTHER.*

GRETEL. Oh, Mother! He's coming! He's coming!

HANS. Yes, he is! I saw him!

MOTHER [*startled*]. Who is coming, my children?

[*The door is flung open and the children rush in, ST. NICHOLAS standing at the door.*

HANS and GRETEL. St. Nicholas! St. Nicholas!

ST. NICHOLAS. Yes, old St. Nicholas again. Mother Madelon, may I come in?

MOTHER. May you come in? Ask the little ones here! [HANS and GRETEL run to draw him in.

FRITZ. You see, Mother Madelon, our Heinrich heard you say the good saint couldn't find you this year——

BARBARA. So we hurried right home——

HEINRICH. And as soon as he came we told him about you——

FRITZ. And begged him to let us show him the way!

JAN. And of course, he came!

KARL and OSCAR. Yes, of course!

MOTHER. It was very thoughtful of you, little friends.

HANS and GRETEL. Thank you, thank you all so much!

GRETEL. Oh, good saint, we were *so* afraid you wouldn't come.

HANS. Mother *said* you couldn't find us.

ST. NICHOLAS. And I doubt if I could have found you, if it hadn't been for that little gleaming candle that you put in the window to light my way.

GRETEL [*holding his hand*]. Oh, but, St. Nicholas, we ought to tell you that we didn't put the candle there for you.

KATRINA. Why, who was it for?

GRETEL [*softly*]. It was for the Christ-Child. We thought perhaps He would be out in the snow and cold—and we were so warm and happy!

ST. NICHOLAS. Let me tell you, little Gretel, though the Christ-Child did not come, it is just as true that He sent me to you as it is that I was led here by the clear shining of the Christ-Candle.

CURTAIN

NOTES ON COSTUME AND SETTING

The parts of the Mother and St. Nicholas should be played by adults: other adult parts taken by young people sixteen to eighteen.

MOTHER MADELON. Plain dark dress, white kerchief, white peasant's cap.

HANS. (Eight years old.) White shirt, bright-colored vest, full blue trousers, red stockings. Toboggan cap.

GRETEL. (Six years.) Full white waist, black bodice, red skirt, or dark skirt and red stockings. White peasant's cap. Both children may wear wooden shoes.

FRIEDEL. (Boy of nine.) Very ragged coat and trousers. Bare feet. No hat. (Should be a thin little fellow whose appearance may give the touch of pathos.)

OLD MARTA. (May be taken by a boy, if preferred.) Poorly dressed, in old shawl and hood, carrying a bundle of fagots. Face deeply wrinkled and lined, with an ill-tempered expression.

RICH JOHANN. Velvet coat, flowered vest, full knee-breeches, shoes with silver buckles. Broad-brimmed felt hat. Silver-headed cane. Is very pompous.

CROSS JACOB. Rough farm clothes, heavy boots.

WOODCUTTER. Fur cap, warm gloves, high boots. Carries an ax. Is young, wholesome, rosy with work, and happy.

STAR CHILD. (Child of seven or eight, who can sing.) White gown, hanging straight from neck to

ground, with flowing sleeves. Carries a gold wand with a star on the end, and wears a star on the forehead. If taken by a boy, he should wear a short white sleeveless tunic, white stockings, and sandals.

FRITZ and his sisters and brothers, children from twelve years down to six, are dressed in ordinary outdoor winter costumes, with as much as possible of bright color about them.

ST. NICHOLAS differs somewhat from the accepted idea of Santa Claus, being dignified, benign, and kindly, rather than lively and jolly. Costume about the same,—long coat, high boots, fur cap, flowing white beard.

NOTE FOR SNOW SCENE. If not feasible to have a winter scene for the back drop, cover the back wall with white, and fasten drooping branches of evergreen at sides, to suggest the limbs of trees just out of sight. The wings may be treated in the same way,—or screens, if given in home or schoolroom. Cover the floor with white, piling with cushions beneath in some places to give an irregular surface, and to make the bank (R. Center), where Friedel lies down. Four or five evergreen trees will make an effective forest, and if quite small, they should be raised to different heights, and banked about with white. Leave opening between them (Back Center), in which the Star Child should appear, coming and going very silently and slowly. Cotton snow upon the little trees and "diamond-dust" over all, help to make this a very pretty scene.

For chimes, play the music of the carol "Oh, Happy Night" on a xylophone, behind the scenes.



TOINETTE AND THE ELVES

IN TWO ACTS

CHARACTERS

MOTHER.

TOINETTE, girl of twelve or fourteen.

MARIE, girl of eleven.

JEANNETTE, little girl of five or six.

PIERRE }
MARC } Boys of ten or eleven.

The Elves:

HOLLYBERRY }
MISTLETOE } Little boys of five or six.
EVERGEEN }
ICICLE }



HOLLYPERRY

TOINETTE AND THE ELVES

From the story by Susan Coolidge, *St. Nicholas* for January, 1876.

ACT I

TIME: *Christmas Eve.*

SCENE: *The kitchen of a peasant cottage. Open fireplace * [R.] with large pot, hung from a crane, or standing directly upon the logs. On the shelf above, small bowls and spoons. Beside fireplace, a narrow exit leading to TOINETTE'S room: opposite, door to other rooms. Outside door, R. Back. L. window. Down stage L. a low table with small chairs, where the children sit for their supper, used later by the Elves. Before the fire, a large old-fashioned wooden rocker.*

MOTHER *bends over sewing, near window, from time to time glancing at TOINETTE, who sits dreamily gazing into the fire.*

MOTHER. Toinette! [TOINETTE, *absorbed in thought, apparently hears nothing.*] Toinette! Bless the child, is she asleep? Toinette!

TOINETTE [*absently*]. Yes, Mother.

MOTHER. Come, Toinette, it is time to brush the hearth and set the kettle on to boil.

TOINETTE [*without moving*]. Yes'm, in a minute.

MOTHER [*sharply*]. Toinette, the dusk is coming.

* See note on Fireplace, p. 313.

It is nearly supper-time, and the candle must be lit. Come, brush the floor quickly, child.

TOINETTE [*flinging impatiently out of her chair*]. I hate to work! [*Sweeps slowly and absently, stopping to lean on her broom. Enter MARIE and JEANNETTE, with sewing and book, and sit down on low chairs.*]

MARIE. Toinette, will you show me how to fasten this off?

TOINETTE [*who has been leaning on her broom, begins suddenly to sweep*]. No, I won't. I'm busy sweeping.

MARIE. Oh, I didn't know you were busy.

TOINETTE. What are your eyes for? Don't you see me sweeping?

MARIE. Well, you were standing still, and I just thought——

TOINETTE [*sweeping furiously*]. You're always "just thinking" things.

JEANNETTE. I'm hungry, Mother.

MOTHER. Are you, dear?

TOINETTE [*crossly, leaning on her broom*]. She's always hungry. I never saw such a little pig.

MARIE [*putting her arms indignantly around JEANNETTE*]. No, she isn't at all. You're very unkind, Toinette.

MOTHER. Hush, children. Don't quarrel. [*Shakes her head sadly and looks perplexed.*]

[*Enter PIERRE and MARC, the latter with knife and bits of wood. MARC sits down against the fireplace, whittling. PIERRE lies at full length before the fire.*]

JEANNETTE. Will you tell us a story, Toinette?

MARIE [*gently*]. Sh, dear, Toinette's busy, but I

wish she would. She can tell such lovely fairy stories when she likes to. And this is Christmas Eve, Jeannette. Perhaps the fairies are out, looking for good children. Fairies are always helping St. Nicholas; Toinette says so. I wish she would get done sweeping.

JEANNETTE. When you get done, can't you tell just one story, Toinette?

TOINETTE. Oh, it's so hard to keep thinking up stories all the time. There now, Marc, you horrid boy, just see how you've scattered chips all over my clean floor. And, Pierre, your old shoes are just as dirty as they can be. What's the use of my sweeping, Mother, when the boys are so careless?

MOTHER. Try to remember to brush your shoes next time, Pierre. And, Marc, it's better not to bring the whittling into the house.

TOINETTE. I should think as much.

PIERRE [*getting up*]. I'm sorry I forgot, Mother. Come along, Marc, we'll go out in the woodshed.

MARC [*giving the chips a brush towards the fireplace with his cap and then following PIERRE*]. It's pretty cold in the woodshed. [*Looking resentfully at TOINETTE*]. I'd rather be cold than get scolded all the time. [*Exeunt boys.*]

MOTHER [*rises, lights candle, puts saucepan over the fire*]. Now, Toinette, I have other work to do. Finish brushing up [*TOINETTE puts down broom*], and set the table. The porridge is over the fire and will be done soon. If you would put your mind on it, daughter, and work quickly, you would get done quickly, and the work would not seem so hard. [*Exit.*]

TOINETTE [*seizes a tablecloth and approaches the table*]. Work quickly! Marie, how ever can I set

the table with you and Jeannette in the way, I'd like to know?

MARIE. We'll go in Mother's room, Toinette.
[*Takes JEANNETTE by the hand. Exeunt.*]

TOINETTE [*covering table and slapping bowls and spoons pettishly down upon it*]. Work quickly! Don't I work and work all the time? And I'm never done. The work seems hard because it *is* hard, that's why. Oh, if we weren't so poor, and didn't have to work so hard! [*Relaxes her efforts and stands before the fire, dish in hand.*] And if we could have beautiful Christmas presents to-morrow, instead of just—anything. [*A very gentle knock at the door.*] Oh, what was that? [*Opens.*] The boys must be playing tricks on me. [*Knocks again.*] Surely, there is someone there. [*Opens door and steps outside. HOLLYBERRY slips in behind her and hides behind the door. Re-enter TOINETTE.*] It must be the fairies, I think. [*Stands looking out.*] This is Christmas Eve and of course it's the right time for good fairies to be about. How I wish I could see one!

HOLLYBERRY. Do you, Toinette? Just open your eyes and you will, then.

TOINETTE [*jumping, rubs her eyes and looks about*]. Where? Oh, where?

[*HOLLYBERRY comes from behind the door and makes a low bow.*]

TOINETTE [*clasping her hands with delight*]. Oh, are you really a fairy?

HOLLYBERRY [*hands on hips*]. Yes, I think I'm a pretty real sort of a fairy. We elves have heard you talking about us and you always tell what's true, so we like you,

TOINETTE. Oh, I'm so glad, because I *love* fairies. The children do too, and they are always teasing me to tell them fairy tales.

HOLLYBERRY. I am the leader of the band of elves. My name is Hollyberry, and I've come with a message to you. I told you the elves and fairies all like you. So we are going to give you a Christmas present.

TOINETTE. Oh, oh! how kind you are.

HOLLYBERRY [*arms folded, nodding his head*]. Yes, we are. Very kind. But people don't always think so. Toinette, how would you like to be invisible?

TOINETTE. Invisible? Oh, do you mean to go around wherever I like without being seen? Oh, what fun!

HOLLYBERRY. That's exactly what I mean. *We* can do it, at any time, because we know how. But mortals like you can only do it on Christmas Eve, and then only when we help them.

TOINETTE. Do you mean you are going to show me how?

HOLLYBERRY. That's it. There are two things you must do. First you must put fern seed in your shoes.

TOINETTE. Fern seed? Why, I didn't even know ferns had seeds. I never saw any.

HOLLYBERRY. Of course not. The elves take very good care of that.

TOINETTE. Where shall I get any?

HOLLYBERRY. I'll attend to that. The second thing is to put on the Cloak of Darkness.

TOINETTE. The Cloak of Darkness! What is that?

HOLLYBERRY. Don't be impatient, Toinette. [*Waves his holly wand and snaps his fingers above his head. The door opens and the other elves enter, carrying between them the gray cloak and a tiny bag.*]

ELVES [*kneeling before TOINETTE and presenting bag and cloak*]. Hail, Toinette!

HOLLYBERRY [*touching the kneeling elves as he names them*]. Evergreen and Mistletoe, present the magic Cloak of Darkness. Icicle, yield the fairy fern seed. Now, Toinette, put a pinch of fern seed in each shoe, wrap the cloak around you, and *then*,—well, nobody but an elf can find you.

MISTLETOE. The charm is only for to-night.

HOLLYBERRY. And if you get tired of it before bedtime——

EVERGREEN. Take off the cloak——

ICICLE. And empty your shoes——

HOLLYBERRY. And, presto! Toinette is herself again. Now, farewell. [*All bow low and go to door.*]

ICICLE. Good-by.

MISTLETOE. We'll take care of the cloak when you're done with it.

EVERGREEN. We hope you'll like our Christmas present. [*Exeunt elves, laughing mischievously.*]

TOINETTE [*looking after them*]. What cunning little fellows! Oh, what fun. [*Examines cloak.*] I'll put it on right away. [*Exit (R.).*]

[*Enter MOTHER (L.), going at once to the fire.*]

MOTHER. Why, where is Toinette? The porridge is almost boiling over. Come, children,—Marie, Jeanette, boys. Supper is ready.

[*Enter children and take their places at table.*]

MOTHER *fills bowls from saucepan while they talk.*

MOTHER [*calls*]. Toinette, come to supper, daughter.

[*Enter TOINETTE in cloak. All are unconscious of her presence.*]

MOTHER [*giving bread to children, who eat hungrily*]. Where can Toinette be? Boys, have you seen her?

MARC. No, Mother, she lets us alone when we keep out of her way.

MOTHER. For shame, Marc. Pierre, go call her,—she may be in her room. [PIERRE *crosses the room, almost bumping into TOINETTE, who stands in the way.*]

PIERRE [*at door*]. Toinette! Toinette! We're at supper. [*A moment's silence. TOINETTE giggles.*] She isn't here, Mother.

MARIE. I'm sure I heard her laughing.

MOTHER. Listen. [TOINETTE *covers her mouth to stifle a laugh. PIERRE sits down again and eats.*]

TOINETTE [*aside*]. This is such fun. But I'm hungry,—how am I going to get anything to eat? [*Goes close to the table and, watching her chance, slips MARC'S bread off the table and eats.*]

MARC. Where's my bread? You took it, Pierre.

PIERRE. I did not. Here's my own.

MARIE. You must have dropped it on the floor.

MARC [*looking under chair*]. No, I didn't.

MARIE. Well, you ate it, then.

MARC. I never. [TOINETTE *laughs silently.*]

MOTHER. Here's another piece. Never mind where that is gone. I only wish Toinette had it. [TOINETTE *nearly chokes.*] The child must have gone out. I will go to the gate and look down the road. [*Exit.*]

JEANNETTE. Poor Toinette's all gone.

MARC. Perhaps a bear has eaten her up.

PIERRE. If he has, I mean to ask Mother if I can't have her room.

MARIE. Marc, don't talk so, you'll frighten Jeannette.

MARC. Well, perhaps it's true.

MARIE. Well, you know you'd be sorry if it was.

PIERRE. I wouldn't be very sorry.

MARIE [*horrified*]. Oh, you bad boy.

PIERRE. Well, of course I don't want her to be *hurt*.

MARC. But we wouldn't care much if she didn't come back.

MARIE. Boys, how can you be so naughty?

PIERRE. But, Marie, Toinette never does a thing but scold us when she's around.

MARIE. She tells us *beautiful* fairy stories sometimes.

MARC. That's just it—"sometimes." You don't catch her doing it unless she wants to.

PIERRE. And she's just a regular old spoil-sport.

MARC. Oh, bother about Toinette. She'll come back a good deal sooner than we want her. Can't you talk about anything else?

MARIE [*doubtfully*]. Well, it is pleasanter when she isn't here, I know.

PIERRE. Of course it is.

MARIE. But I hope she's having a good time somewhere else.

[*Throughout this conversation TOINETTE listens, horrified at first, then angry, then distressed; at one moment about to exclaim, then starting forward to strike one of the boys, and at last covering her face with her hands and crying. Enter*
MOTHER.

MOTHER [*anxiously*]. Not a trace can I see of her. Children, have you eaten your porridge? Marie, take Jeannette to bed. [*Exeunt MARIE and JEANNETTE.*] Boys, go out and cut some wood for our Christmas fire. [*Exeunt boys.*] There will be no Christmas in this house

unless Toinette comes back soon. [*Sits down in the rocker to warm herself.*] Dear, dear, she is a good girl, and a clever girl, but she is a sore puzzle to me. What can make her so thoughtless and careless and full of discontent? Why, even little Marie is a greater help to me than she is.

[*Exit TOINETTE in great distress. MOTHER sits in silence. Enter TOINETTE without cloak, throwing herself on her knees at her mother's feet.*

TOINETTE. Oh, Mother, Mother! [*Buries her face in her mother's lap.*]

MOTHER [*trying to raise her*]. Toinette, my child! Where have you been all this time?

TOINETTE [*with great excitement, half crying*]. Oh, I've been here—right here—all the time, only you couldn't see me.

MOTHER. Toinette!

TOINETTE. Yes, Mother, it's all true. I'll tell you. A fairy came and lent me the Cloak of Darkness—and—and—I thought it would be such fun, but it was horrid. And then the children—they said such cruel things. Mother, don't they love me at all?

MOTHER. Mercy, mercy, what is all this about? Fairies—cloak of darkness—the child must have a fever. [*Feels TOINETTE's forehead and takes her hand as if to count her pulse.*]

TOINETTE. No, no! I'm not sick at all. But, Mother, don't you love me?

MOTHER [*puts her arm about TOINETTE*]. Love you, my child? Mother *always* loves you.

TOINETTE. But you said I didn't help you. Oh, I wish the fairy had never given me the cloak.

MOTHER. Fairies again! [*Anxiously.*] I must put the child to bed at once. Stay by the fire, Toinette. I will get your bed ready. [*Rises, leaving TOINETTE seated on the floor by chair. Exit MOTHER.*]

TOINETTE [*slowly*]. Mother thinks I dreamed it—or that I'm sick. But I'm not. It's all true, it's all true. [*Covers her face with her hands.*] How could the children be so unkind? . . . But perhaps I'm not always kind to the children. The boys are so provoking—but then I needn't scold them even if they are. And Marie must care a little, for she hoped I was happy somewhere. Happy! How can I be happy? [*Gazes at the fire.*] Perhaps if I began now, and tried and tried every day, I could be kinder—to the children—and then they would love me more—and I could try to help Mother—and then she needn't be so tired all the time—— And surely, then I would be happy. [*Brightly, facing audience, hands clasped on one knee.*] Yes, that's just what I'll do. And now, perhaps I can help Mother this very minute—— I'll take the candle up to her. [*Jumps up, takes candle from table, pauses in center of the stage.*] It is Christmas—I do think that if I begin to-morrow to try to be kind, I will surely succeed. Because Christmas is the very best and happiest day in all the whole year. It was on Christmas Day the angels first sang about Peace on earth, good will to men.

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *One year later. Christmas Eve.*

SCENE: *Curtain rises showing TOINETTE and MARIE seated, sewing; JEANNETTE sits upon the floor, leaning against TOINETTE'S knee; MARC leans over the back of her chair; PIERRE sits in the big chair rocking and looking on. All are singing a Christmas carol. Enter MOTHER, pausing a moment in doorway to watch and smile at the group.*

MOTHER. Come, chickabiddies, it is time to stop work.

MARIE [*going to MOTHER*]. Oh, Mother, must we stop now? Toinette was just going to tell us the Christmas story about the Shepherds and the Star in the East.

MOTHER. It is supper-time now, and Toinette must set the table. [*Exit.*]

PIERRE. And after supper comes bedtime. Oh, dear.

TOINETTE [*cheerfully folding her work*]. Never mind, Pierre, I'll tell it to you to-morrow.

MARC. That'll be Christmas day, Toinette. I wish you could tell it on Christmas Eve.

TOINETTE. Oh, I think I can tell it better on Christmas day, Marc. Now we all have something to do,—let's get to work. Who will fetch water for me to-night?

MARC and PIERRE [*springing for the pitcher*]. I will, I will.

MARC. It's my turn, Pierre.

PIERRE. No, you nearly always get water for Toinette. I'm going to.

TOINETTE. Let Pierre get the water, Marc, and you go and cut the wood.

MARC and PIERRE. All right, Toinette. [*Exeunt.*]

MARIE. What can we do for you, Toinette, dear?

TOINETTE. Nothing just now, I think. [*TOINETTE is spreading the cloth and setting the bowls and spoons.*]

JEANNETTE. But *we* want to help, too, dear Toinette. [*Clings to her skirt.*]

TOINETTE. I'll tell you what. I'd rather send my two little helpers in to see what they can do for poor busy Mother. She needs them more than I do. [*Exit JEANNETTE.*]

MARIE [*following*]. Won't that be helping you too, Toinette?

TOINETTE. Yes, dear. [*Exit MARIE.*] How good the children are to-night! I do think they are the best brothers and sisters a girl ever had. [*Lighting the candle.*] And I think they love me more than they ever used to. Oh, I'm so glad! [*Tap at the door.*] There is someone knocking. [*Goes to the door.*]

HOLLYBERRY [*bowing low*]. How do you do, Toinette? A Merry Christmas to you.

TOINETTE. Oh, how wonderful. It's Hollyberry again, and I was just thinking about you. Won't you come in?

HOLLYBERRY. Just for a moment. [*Enter HOLLYBERRY. TOINETTE closes the door.*] I've brought you a Christmas present, Toinette. [*Holds out cloak and fern-seed bag.*]

TOINETTE [*retreating, hands behind her*]. Oh, no, no, no! I know what those are, and I don't want

them. Oh! Hollyberry, they made me so unhappy last year.

HOLLYBERRY. You didn't like the elves' gift, then?

TOINETTE. Oh, it was horrid—I *hated* it.

HOLLYBERRY [*severely*]. Do you call that being grateful?

TOINETTE [*confused*]. Oh, no—I mean, yes—that is, it was very kind of you—but I didn't like it. Oh, dear!

HOLLYBERRY [*kindly*]. Never mind, Toinette, I'm only teasing you now. And I advise you to take the fern seed. You will like it better this year, I'm sure.

TOINETTE [*anxiously*]. Truly?

HOLLYBERRY. Truly. [TOINETTE *takes bag and cloak.*] And if you like it we are going to ask a favor of you. We want you to make us some fern-seed broth.

TOINETTE. Fern-seed broth?

HOLLYBERRY. Yes, elves are very fond of it, but they don't get any very often, because it has to be made over a fire, and you see we're afraid of fire. We're so little and light, we might be blown in and burned up.

TOINETTE. But how shall I make it?

HOLLYBERRY. It's very easy. We'll show you how. And now, good-by. We'll come in by and by when the children are in bed. [*Exit with a bow.*]

TOINETTE [*looking gravely at cloak and bag*]. Oh, do I dare use them? I have tried to be kinder—I know the children love me more—— Yes, I will. [*Runs out. Boys singing carol in the distance. Enter boys singing, with pitcher and wood. Enter MOTHER, MARIE, and JEANNETTE.*]

MOTHER. Why, the supper is all ready, but where is that busy bee of ours, Toinette? [*Goes to door as if to call.*]

PIERRE [*catches her arm*]. Oh, Mother, wait a moment; don't call her yet! You know we've made her some Christmas gifts, and we want to put them on her plate and surprise her.

MOTHER. Run and get them.

MARC [*under his breath*]. Hurry, quick, everybody.

[*Exit children in haste. MOTHER takes saucepan from fire and fills bowls. Enter children singing carol, each bearing a home-made gift. They place the presents about TOINETTE'S place, and all take their places at the table, sitting with folded hands until hymn is ended. During the singing TOINETTE enters, dressed in cloak, and stands near door [R.], her hands clasped in pleasure at the sight.*

MARC [*looking towards the door*]. Oh, I wish Toinette would hurry.

MARIE. Won't she be surprised?

PIERRE. And won't she *look* jolly surprised, too? I love to see Toinette when she's surprised. Her eyes get so big and shiny, and she just stares.

MARC. Andrew, the blacksmith's son, thinks his sister is prettier than our Toinette, but *I* don't.

PIERRE [*in great scorn*]. Aw! I should think not. Our Toinette is just the prettiest girl in the village.

MARIE. And the very nicest, too!

MOTHER [*smiling*]. And Toinette is Mother's right hand. We all love Toinette! Don't we?

TOINETTE [*softly*]. Oh, the dear little things! I can't wait a minute longer. [*Exit quickly.*]

CHILDREN [*calling*]. Toinette! Toinette! [*Enter TOINETTE without cloak. Shows great surprise.*]

CHILDREN. Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Toinette!

TOINETTE. Oh, oh! what do I see? [*Sits down in her place.*] Oh, did you make these lovely things, children?

PIERRE. Yes, mademoiselle, we did!

MARC. Every one of them.

MARIE. Nobody helped us.

JEANNETTE. All for you, Toinette, all for you! [*Leaves her chair and throws her arms around TOINETTE.*]

TOINETTE [*kissing her*]. Oh, thank you, thank you! How *beautifully* these are made. [*Looks them over one at a time.*] How good everyone is. I'm so happy I don't know what to do.

PIERRE. And to-morrow's Christmas! Hurrah!

MOTHER. Yes, dear, but if you don't go to bed and to sleep, Christmas won't come. [*Takes JEANNETTE by the hand.*] We will leave you to finish, Toinette.

CHILDREN. Good-night, Toinette!

TOINETTE. Good-night, everyone! [*MARIE and JEANNETTE throw their arms about TOINETTE.*]

MARIE. Good-night again, dear Toinette! [*Exeunt all but TOINETTE, who clears the table, shakes off crumbs, and sets fresh bowls and spoons. The children are heard singing carol. When all is ready and the song is done, TOINETTE goes to outer door and looks out. After a moment the elves rush in.*]

ELVES. Here we are, Toinette, here we are!

HOLLYBERRY. Now let's proceed to business. Where is the saucepan, Toinette! Icicle, give me the honey-dew; Mistletoe, you have the fern seed.

[*TOINETTE produces the saucepan and the*

elves crowd around her and hand her the articles named. The honey-dew is supposed to be in a jar—or pitcher—or anything curious or unusual in appearance; the fern seed in a quaint box.

HOLLYBERRY. Now, Evergreen, give me the holly stick she must stir it with.

[TOINETTE puts it on the fire, the elves watching with great interest.

HOLLYBERRY. It's very simple, but it must be made with great care.

MISTLETOE. You must always stir it the same way!

EVERGREEN. Or else it will curdle.

ICICLE. And you must *never* let it scorch!

[TOINETTE bends over fire, stirring broth. A very gay waltz in very quick time is played softly outside, and the four elves dance and tumble about, coming up one at a time to peep over TOINETTE's shoulder. They show great fear of the fire, however.

TOINETTE. Now, little Elves, the feast is ready!

ELVES. Oh, joy! Oh, joy! [*All seat themselves at table, TOINETTE pours out broth, and they eat. Music continues, TOINETTE refills bowls, and elves drink from them, tipping their heads far back and making grotesque motions. Music grows fainter. Elves rise and bow to TOINETTE.*]

ELVES. Thank you, Toinette! Thank you!

EVERGREEN. We've had a merry feast.

MISTLETOE. And fairies are never ungrateful.

ICICLE. When you need us, you'll find us ready.

[EVERGREEN, MISTLETOE, and ICICLE go out-

side and stand about door. HOLLYBERRY remains within.

TOINETTE. But I haven't thanked you at all!

HOLLYBERRY. No need of that, Toinette. [*He brushes door-post with his holly wand.*] Be lucky, house! We are the luck-bringers, and we have feasted here! [*Touches TOINETTE on the head and hands.*] Be lucky, Toinette! Good temper, and kindness, and unselfishness are the very best good luck, after all. Now, good-by!

ELVES. Good-by, good-by! Merry Christmas to all!

[*Exeunt. TOINETTE closes the door and goes slowly to hearth, where she sits down on floor, resting her arm on a chair and her head on her hand.*]

TOINETTE [*softly*]. The fairies have been here, and they have taught me a lesson. . . . After all, it isn't the fairies who make the children love me, or me love the children. . . . I think—yes, I'm sure—that it is Christmas that makes us all love each other!

[*Her head drops, and she falls asleep. The children's voices are heard, singing, very softly and distinctly, the last verse of the carol:*

"Thank God on Christmas morning!
Thank God, O children dear."

CURTAIN

NOTES ON COSTUME AND SETTING

The children are dressed in peasant costumes, the girls in bright skirts and stockings, white guimpes, black velvet bodices, and Normandy caps; the boys in full trousers, bright stockings, vests of green or blue, fastening in the back, white shirts with full sleeves, and toboggan caps. Toinette wears shoes with buckles; the others may wear the same, or sabots.

MOTHER. Plain dark dress, with full skirt; kerchief on her shoulders, and a white cap.

The magic "Cloak of Darkness" brought by the Elves for Toinette, is a long cape, with hood attached, made of light gray canton flannel.

The Fern-seed Bag may be made of a bit of the same material, or of the colors of Hollyberry's costume.

The Elves wear harlequin costumes in two shades of the same color, with tall pointed hoods, and long shoes with toes turned up. Gilt bells on all points of collar, jacket, and hood. See illustration. Sateen is perhaps the best material for these little suits, as it comes in a great variety of rich shades, but cheaper goods may be found.

HOLLYBERRY. Dark red and scarlet. He carries a holly branch in lieu of a wand.

MISTLETOE. Brown and yellow. In Act II he carries an odd box supposed to be full of fern seed.

EVERGREEN. Dark and light green. In Act II he produces the holly stick for stirring the broth.

ICICLE. Dark and light blue. In Act II he carries

a small jar or pitcher,—something curious or unusual in appearance,—which is supposed to contain the honey-dew.

Instead of the gilt bells, the points of these suits may be trimmed with bits of holly, mistletoe, evergreen, and glass icicles, as indicated by the names.

In setting the stage, it is effective to make small windows, with diamond-shaped panes, and white sash-curtains, placing small pots of scarlet geraniums on the sills.

The song is "Good News on Christmas Morning," from *St. Nicholas Songs* (Century Company).

Where music is indicated through the play, any part of the carol is sung, except the last verse, which is used only once, just before the last curtain. For the Elves' dance, the Pizzicato from the ballet "Sylvia" by Delibes, Dvorak's "Humoresque," or a waltz, very lightly played, may be used.



TOM'S PLAN

IN TWO ACTS

CHARACTERS

FATHER WRIGHT.

MOTHER WRIGHT.

PHIL

DAISY

CHARLIE

TOM

DOT

SARAH, the nurse.

SANTA CLAUS.

} The little Wrights.

TOM'S PLAN

ACT I

TIME: *Christmas Eve.*

SCENE: *Nursery or sitting-room, children sitting about, each working upon a Christmas gift. Nurse at one side with her work-basket. All singing a Christmas carol.**

DAISY. I just can't believe that to-morrow really will be Christmas! . . . What do you think of that for a book-mark? [*Holds it up.*] Don't you suppose Papa will be pleased?

PHIL [*driving a last nail into a bootjack*]. Papa says he can't get his new boots off. If he can't do it now, with this, I'm sure he never will be able to. Isn't that fine?

SARAH. Sure, Master Phil, he'll be wantin' a new house to kape that big thing in!

DAISY. Now, Sarah, you mustn't say that! You know Papa always likes the things we make for him.

DOT [*crossing to SARAH*]. Sarah, please fasten my thread. . . . Now, my spectacle-wiper is done. Oh, boys, don't you wish it was to-morrow morning!

TOM. You bet! I'm going to do Papa's knife up in a great big bundle, so he'll think it's a pair of slippers or a book, anyway, and see how surprised he'll be.

CHARLIE [*clapping his hands*]. What fun! Say, Tom, don't you wish we could *see* Santa Claus?

* See note on Carols, p. 315.

PHIL. Let's try and stay awake all night.

DOT. No! you bad boys! Santa Claus doesn't like to have children see him when he comes to put things in the stockings.

DAISY. No, of course he doesn't. And, besides, Mamma has a better way. She told me to ask you all whether you would rather hang your stockings this year, or get Santa Claus to come and bring us a tree.

CHARLIE. Oh, jolly! But how is Santa Claus going to know in time?

PHIL. That's what I'd like to know.

DAISY. I asked Papa that, and he said, Oh, he guessed he could telegraph.

TOM. Then do let's have him come here!

CHILDREN. Oh, yes, let's!

DOT. I want to thank him for my dolly's bed that he brought last year.

DAISY. Well, I'll go tell Mamma. [*Exit.*]

SARAH. Ye'd all better come down and wrap up yer things now.

PHIL. All right. Come along. [*Exeunt all but TOM.*]

TOM. I'll be along in a minute. [*Looks up chimney.*] I'm so glad Santa Claus is coming this year. [*Crosses to front of stage and sits astride a small chair with its back to audience.*] There are so many things I want to know about him. I'm just going to count. [*Checks off on his fingers.*] First, I want to know where he lives. Daisy says he lives at the North Pole, and she's got a picture of his house, with icicles and snow all over it. But then he always brings us oranges and bananas and nuts and figs, and I know *they* don't grow at the North Pole. I wish I could find out. Next, what he

feeds the reindeer on. Next, how he ever gets all the things into the sleigh. How fast the reindeer can go. And whether they ever get balky. He'd be late all the time if they did. Horses do, but perhaps reindeer are different. But the one thing I'd rather know than all the others put together, is just this: Sarah *said*, the other day when I took a bite out of one of her hot pies, that Santa Claus [*very slowly and impressively*] would put a whip in my stocking! Now I wonder if he would do that? [*Thinks awhile, then shakes his head.*] No, no! I don't believe he would. He's always smiling in his pictures, and he looks so jolly. And then, if anybody wanted to spend all his time giving presents, like Santa Claus, I don't believe he would ever put ashes or whips in anybody's stocking, just because he forgot the pie was for company. . . . Oh, dear! I wish I did know. [*Jumps up suddenly, puts one knee on the chair, and holds on to the back with both hands.*] Oh! Oh! I've got such a splendid plan! It'll be easy enough to find out, after all. I don't really want anything for Christmas this year . . . 'cept maybe a sled, and . . . well, I guess Phil will let me coast on his sled. Now, I'm going to be just as cross, *as cross as a bear*, to-night and *see* if Santa Claus will give me a whip. I don't care—I know he won't! Anyway, Mamma never lets anybody whip me—only Papa—and if Santa Claus wants me whipped he'll have to give the whip to Papa. There! I hear somebody coming. I'm just going to begin right off.

CHARLIE [*calling, without*]. Tom, Tom! Aren't you coming to wrap up your things?

TOM [*very crossly*]. No!

CHARLIE [*much surprised*]. *Why* not?

TOM. Don't want to. [*Chuckles.*] He sounded

rather surprised. I guess they won't know what to make of it. It'll be such fun! [*Sits astride chair again.*] Here comes somebody else. I won't look around. [*Puts his head down on his arms. Enter DOT.*]

DOT. Tom!

TOM. What do you want?

DOT [*timidly*]. What's the matter, Tom?

TOM. Ain't nothing the matter.

DOT [*aside*]. Oh, dear! Tom, do you want me to wrap up the knife for you?

TOM. Can if you want to. Here. [*Takes it from his pocket and hands it to her without looking up.*]

DOT [*aside*]. What can 'be the matter? We can't any of us be happy if Tom isn't. [*Exit, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.*]

TOM [*looking after her*]. 'Tisn't so much fun as I thought. [*Puts his head down. Enter SARAH.*]

SARAH [*hands on hips, looking at TOM*]. Well, what 'ud be the trouble here? [*Goes about, putting things to rights. Dusts chair, giving TOM a brush.*]

TOM [*hits out at her*]. Go 'way!

SARAH. Oh, is that yerself?

TOM. Yes, it's meself.

SARAH. Well, what's the matter wid yerself?

TOM. Never you mind what! [*The other children run in.*]

DAISY. Oh, Sarah, Sarah, give us our coats, quick! Papa says he'll take us along Fourth Street, to see the shop windows lighted up!

CHARLIE. Do hurry, Sarah!

DAISY. I can't find my mittens!

DOT [*softly, nudging PHIL*]. Phil, tell Tom to come.

PHIL. Come along, Tom, and be quick!

TOM. Won't.

PHIL. You *won't*?

CHARLIE. Why not?

TOM. Don't want to.

CHARLIE. Well, then, don't! Come on, Dot!

[*Takes her by the arm, and leads her out.* PHIL and DAISY look at TOM.]

DAISY. Please come, Tom.

TOM. I tell you I won't.

DAISY. We'll have such fun.

TOM. Well, you can have it for all me.

PHIL. See here, Tom, don't be a donkey! Come along! [*Takes him by the arm.*]

TOM [*shakes him off*]. Get out!

DAISY. Well, I suppose we'll have to go without him. Papa is waiting. [*They start.*] Phil, what is the matter with Tom?

PHIL. I don't know. Dot said he was cross——
[*Exeunt.*]

SARAH. Ye'd betther remember what I was a-tellin' ye, Master Tom. Ye gettin' ready for the stick?

TOM. You be still and clear out, Sarah!

SARAH. Oh, I'm a-goin'—I'm a-goin'! Shall I tell Santa Claus to make it out of rattan, Master Tom?

TOM. Go on out, I say! [*Chases her out.*] Well, it's some fun to be cross to Sarah, but I really don't like to be cross to Dot and the others. Oh, dear! I wish I didn't have to. [*Sees SARAH'S dust-cloth, which he rolls into a wad and tucks into a cap lying on one of the chairs.*] He-he! that'll fix her. Now she can't find it. [*Enter SARAH.* TOM sits down by the fire, holding his knee.] What do you want?

SARAH. Oh, my clearin'-up's not done yet! I de-

clare, if I've redd up this room once, I've done it forty times this day. [*Straightens things, then looks for her duster.* TOM *watches slyly.*] Did I take that cloth downstairs wid me? Sure, I know I didn't. Where did I put it, then? 'Tain't here annywheres. Maybe that little squirrel hid it. Seen my duster, Tom?

TOM. No, I don't see your duster.

SARAH. Did I ax ye if ye saw it now? I said, have ye sane it?

TOM. And I said I didn't see it.

SARAH. Well, ye little fox, I know yer tricks, and I'll find it yet. Them as hides, finds, but sometimes other folks can find, too, when they know who did the hiding. Ah! what did I tell ye! I've got it at last. I knew ye put it somewheres. Now I can get my work done.

TOM. Well, don't you bother me.

SARAH [*stands with hands on hips, looking at TOM, who scowls at her*]. If I were you, I wouldn't scowl like that, Master Tom; yer furhead might stay that way.

TOM. If I were you, I wouldn't either.

SARAH. Ye don't look a bit pretty, Master Tom.

TOM. You don't have to look at me.

SARAH. See, this is what ye look like. [*Makes a face and hunches up her shoulders.* TOM *refuses to look.*] Do ye think that's rale handsome? [*Aside.*] Well, since I can't t'ase ye into a good humor, I'll go on down. [*Exit.*]

TOM. I did want to laugh at her awfully. If she comes in again, I think I'll just have to.

[*Enter DAISY and PHIL.*]

DAISY. We didn't go far, because it was so late. Phil, did you ever see anything so perfectly grand as that last window? [*Taking off things.*]

PHIL. Never! Don't I wish I had that air-rifle!

DAISY. I'd rather have the doll's piano than anything else.

[*Enter SARAH with DOT and CHARLIE.*

SARAH takes children's coats, etc.

SARAH. Here, give me yer coats. Now just sit down and get warm for a minute, and then ye've got to go to bed. Yer Ma said so.

DAISY. Let's sing while we're here. We don't know our new carol very well. [*All begin to sing a carol. TOM claps, stamps, whistles, and bangs his chair up and down, to put them out. They stop.*]

CHARLIE. See here, Tom, if you don't want to sing, you don't have to, but you shan't stop us!

SARAH. No, sir! That ye shall not. Ye can't stay here makin' disturbances, so just be off with ye to bed. [*Pushes him out. Children sing a carol, and curtain falls during last verse.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *Christmas morning.*

SCENE: *Sitting-room with open fire [back Center] in fireplace through which SANTA CLAUS may enter. FATHER and MOTHER sitting by fire, FATHER with paper, MOTHER sewing. PHIL and CHARLIE in one corner [R. Front], reading together. DAISY and DOT [L. Front] with dolls.*

DAISY. And I caught Mamma! I hid behind the door, and jumped out and shouted "Merry Christmas!" before she saw me at all.

DOT [*leaning towards DAISY*]. Daisy, let's say it to Santa Claus.

DAISY. Oh, do you suppose he would like it?

DOT. Why not?

DAISY. Yes, I guess he would. Dear Santa Claus, nobody ever thinks of saying "Merry Christmas" to him.

DOT. Poor man! Well, Daisy, his little boys and girls might say it to him.

DAISY. Oh, Dot! He hasn't any little boys and girls to say it. Don't you know he's an old man, oh, hundreds of years old? And if he ever did have any little boys and girls, they're all grown up by this time.

DOT. Maybe he's got some grandchildren.

DAISY. No, I don't believe he has, for then why do they let him do all the work? Nobody ever fills stockings but Santa Claus.

DOT. Poor Santa Claus! He must get very tired.

DAISY. I wonder . . . I wonder who keeps house for Santa Claus?

DOT. Maybe nobody does.

DAISY. Oh, yes! He must have somebody to make his fires, and cook his meals, and darn his socks.

DOT. Why, he doesn't wear socks. Don't you know, he's all dressed in fur in the pictures. But perhaps fur wears out and has to be mended. I'd like to help her do it.

DAISY. Perhaps she's a real cross, ugly woman, and scolds him when he stays out too long filling stockings, and doesn't give him enough sugar in his tea, and never lets him have but one cup!

DOT [*shaking her head*]. Poor Santa Claus! Aren't you sorry for him, Daisy? I am. [DAISY *nods*.] Daisy, if he hasn't any little children, I don't suppose anybody ever gives him any Christmas presents?

DAISY [*pityingly*]. No, I don't suppose anyone ever does.

DOT [*excitedly*]. Oh, Daisy, let's *us* give him a present this year!

DAISY. Oh, how splendid! Of course we will. But what do you think he would like?

DOT. Let's think. He travels all the time. Perhaps he would like a comb and brush case.

DAISY. Dot! You don't suppose he can ever comb out all that hair! It's a great deal too thick and snarly. He doesn't use a comb and brush.

DOT. Well, I'll give him my new purse.

DAISY. Santa Claus doesn't need a pocketbook to carry money—he doesn't buy things.

DOT. But he might come to a toll-gate on the road, sometime.

DAISY. All right. And I'll give him my silk muffler, for I'm afraid his housekeeper doesn't give him enough warm clothes. Come, let's get them. [*Exeunt.*]

CHARLIE. What's this picture about, Phil?

PHIL. That's where Santa Claus is coming down our chimney.

CHARLIE. I wonder why he likes to come down chimneys? I'd have a latchkey, and come in at the front door.

PHIL. Everybody doesn't have a front door just like ours, Charlie. His key wouldn't fit all the doors.

CHARLIE. But I'd have a magic key, that did. When Papa shaves, and puts that white stuff all over his face, he looks just like Santa Claus, but he wouldn't look like him long if he put his head up the chimney. Santa Claus must get very dirty,—perhaps he looks like the chimney-sweep.

PHIL. Oh, no, he doesn't. You'll see how he looks pretty soon. Come along, let's try our new sleds.

[*Exeunt.*]

MOTHER. My dear, I want to speak to you. [*FATHER drops paper.*] Sarah tells me that Tom has been very naughty and cross. He wouldn't do as she told him, and was disagreeable to the other children.

FATHER. Tom! Why, he's the best-tempered chicken I've got.

MOTHER. I believe you think so just because he's named after you. But he is really dreadfully provoking sometimes, and I don't know what to do with him now.

FATHER. Oh, ho! You've given up in despair, and want to fall back on me?

MOTHER. Not at all. But I'd like your advice.

Would you pay no attention to it, or would you take him to task for his naughtiness?

FATHER. Mary, I always told you you couldn't manage the boys. You are too gentle and yielding. You are never strict enough. You ought to be firm, my dear!

MOTHER. Firm like yourself? Oh, Tom, who was it that wouldn't punish the boys when they played truant, and pretended to know nothing about it when they went in swimming unbeknownst?

FATHER. Oh, well, Mary, you couldn't expect me to be hard on them for the very things I did myself!

MOTHER. I knew I couldn't, so I attended to them myself. But I'll just send Tom in here, and let you try your luck with him. [*Exit.*]

FATHER. Try my luck, indeed! I flatter myself that I'll soon bring him around. [*Stands before fire. Enter TOM, very slowly, hands in pockets.*] Good-morning, Tom. [*Very pleasantly.*]

TOM [*mutters*]. Morning.

FATHER. That is no way to speak, my son. Good-morning, Tom.

TOM [*a little louder*]. Morning.

FATHER. See here, Tom, we can't have this. Your mother says you haven't been very good.

TOM. Don't care.

FATHER. Thomas, that is not a respectful way to speak to your father. What do you mean by it, sir? [*No answer.*] Do you mean to tell me? [*TOM is silent, and stands looking down and kicking the leg of a chair.*] Go upstairs and stay there until I send for you. [*Exit TOM.*] This is most extraordinary! What can have got into the child?

[*Enter MOTHER.*]

FATHER. Ah, here's Mary again.

MOTHER. Well, what did you say?

FATHER. I—a—I scolded him.

MOTHER. What did he say?

FATHER. He said—well—in fact, he didn't say anything.

MOTHER. Wouldn't, you mean. Did you punish him?

FATHER. Punish him? No, I didn't punish him. Come, now, Mary, you don't mean to say you want me to punish him on Christmas morning? I really couldn't do that.

MOTHER. Oh, no, I don't want you to punish him.

FATHER. Well, my dear, on the whole, I think perhaps *you'd* better talk to him. I'll send him down.

[*Exit.*

MOTHER. I didn't think Tom could do much with that boy when he was contrary. [*Enter TOM.*] Well, Tom, dear, don't you want to come and sit with Mamma a little while?

TOM [*rather doubtfully*]. Ye-es.

MOTHER. Here is your little chair all ready. [*TOM sits down with his elbows on his knees, and his chin in his hands.*] Sarah has told me something that makes me sorry. She said that you were naughty last night? Is that so?

TOM [*reluctantly*]. Yes, I was cross.

MOTHER. She said you were cross again this morning.

TOM. Yes, I was naughty this morning, too.

MOTHER. Oh-h-h, Tommy! I'm so sorry to have my little boy so naughty on Christmas Day. Don't you think that when people want to be happy and glad, everyone ought to be good and pleasant, too?

TOM [*the words drawn out against his will*]. Yes, I think so.

MOTHER. And then there is the beautiful story of that wonderful first Christmas. Don't you think people were very happy on that Day? And you know we always think of that on Christmas, now.

TOM. Oh, yes, I do too.

MOTHER [*reproachfully*]. Then, Tom, how *could* you be so naughty?

TOM. Well, Mamma, do you think it's so *dreadfully* naughty to be cross?

MOTHER. It is not so naughty as some things you might do, but it is making other people unhappy, and don't you think that is pretty bad?

TOM. Well, Mamma, if a fellow didn't *feel* cross at all, but had a very good reason for *being* cross, would that be naughty?

MOTHER. I don't think there can be any good reason for being cross.

TOM. I do.

MOTHER. What is it?

TOM. It's a secret. It's a *very* good reason. I'm sorry it's naughty. I didn't think it was. But *I'm not sorry I did it*.

MOTHER. Oh, Tommy, it makes me feel badly to hear you talk so. I'll leave you here, and let you think it over. Perhaps you'll feel pleasanter after awhile. You can call me when you do.

TOM [*leaving his little chair for a big one*]. I'm sorry they all think I'm so bad, and I'm really very tired of being cross, but I *must* find out about Santa Claus, for if he's the kind of man that would bring anybody ashes or whips on Christmas, I don't believe I'll like him at

all! [*Jingling of bells in chimney.*] What's that? [*Louder bells.*] I do believe he's coming now! [*Jumps up.*] Oh, dear! where are the others? I wish they would come! I—I—I guess I'm just a *little bit* afraid! [*Gets behind his chair. Enter SANTA CLAUS through the fireplace.*]

SANTA CLAUS. That's a fine wide chimney! [*Stoops to look up it.*] Why doesn't everybody keep a chimney like that for my special use? [*Comes front.*] I'm sure when I only come once a year, I ought to have some attention paid to my wants!

TOM [*faintly*]. Santa Claus!

SANTA CLAUS. Hello! What's this? Where are you, anyway? [*Looks about, then over chair, and sees TOM.*] What! Hiding from me? Come out at once, and tell me what's the matter with you.

TOM [*coming out*]. Santa Claus, have you got the whip and ashes?

SANTA CLAUS. Whip and ashes! Bless me, what's the boy talking about? Whip? I left my sleigh whip on the roof, if that's what you mean, and I never carry *ashes* around with me. What are you driving at? Hey?

TOM. Sarah said you gave whips to bad boys, and I've been very naughty—oh, dreadfully naughty!

SANTA CLAUS. Naughty? Dear, dear! I'm sorry to hear that! And on Christmas, too! What a pity! When you knew I was coming? Dear, dear, dear!

TOM. *Have* you got the whip, then?

SANTA CLAUS. No, no! I never give anybody whips—excepting toy ones, with a whistle in the end, like this—[*gives TOM one*]—and Sarah was just teasing you. I'll have to see Sarah about that. I won't have anybody telling stories about me. But, dear, dear, it makes me

unhappy to think you could be so naughty. Why did you do it?

TOM [*looks around cautiously*]. Don't tell anybody, Santa Claus, but I was naughty on purpose, just to see if you would give me a whip.

SANTA CLAUS. Well, that's a joke! Don't you know enough to see that you ought to have waited to ask me, instead of running such a risk?

TOM [*remorsefully*]. Sure enough! I could have done that! And now I've gone and made them all feel sorry, just for nothing. [*Enter FATHER and MOTHER.*]

FATHER. Well, well, here's Santa Claus! I haven't seen you for a long time. How do you do, sir, how do you do? [*They shake hands.*]

MOTHER [*at door*]. Children! Children! Come here! [*Enter children.*]

CHILDREN. Oh, Santa Claus! Santa Claus!

DAISY and DOT. Merry Christmas, Santa Claus!

DAISY. We've got some presents for you, Santa Claus. Dot and I thought nobody would remember to give you anything, so we wanted to. [*Giving presents.*]

SANTA CLAUS. Well, really, my dears, these are very nice. Bless your little hearts, nobody has remembered me for some time, and that's a fact! Mr. Wright, how have these children been behaving themselves? Can I give them the nice things I have brought for them?

FATHER. Yes, sir! I'm happy to say, they have been very good, very good, indeed. Oh—[*aside*—now I'm forgetting that rascal, Tom! [*To SANTA CLAUS.*]] That is—they've all been good except one—and he—a—well——

MOTHER [*looking at TOM*]. He is sorry now, I hope, Santa Claus, and will try not to do so any more.

SANTA CLAUS. Oh! Ha-ha! you're talking about this fellow, are you? [*Puts his hand on TOM's shoulder and draws him forward.*] Well, he's just been explaining to me that it was all a mistake——

FATHER [*sternly*]. I hope he has not been trying to hide his misdoings from you, Santa Claus.

SANTA CLAUS. Not at all, sir, not at all. He confessed like a man. But there is this about it that you didn't know. Somebody told him that I put whips in the stockings of naughty children. Well, he naturally thought I was to be distrusted—shocking way to malign me, wasn't it?—and of course he wanted to find out. So what did he do to test me but *try* to be naughty—acted it out to perfection, I've no doubt. Pretty severe on his brothers and sisters and parents, wasn't it? [SANTA CLAUS and FATHER *laugh.*]

MOTHER. Why, Tommy, it's a pity you didn't just come to me and ask about it. It would have saved so much trouble. Why didn't you do that?

TOM. I never once thought of that way, Mamma!

SANTA CLAUS. Well, my son, your thinking-cap is the only cap you don't have to take off in the house, so remember to keep it on, next time. Mr. Wright, I'm sure he feels sorry enough about his mistake to justify me in giving him his full share of presents. Come, children, look and see what I've got for you. I brought it last night, to have it all ready, and I think it ought to hold enough for all, don't you?

[*Curtains at side of stage fall, and disclose the Tree.* General distribution of presents follows.*]

* See note on Tree, p. 314, and on Tree-songs, p. 315.

NOTES ON COSTUME AND SETTING

For this play, ordinary costume is all that is required. Adult parts are taken by two girls and a boy, of fourteen or fifteen, and these, of course, need something especial, but little girls can easily borrow their equipment from mothers or sisters. Father Wright should wear a mustache and, if desired, a beard.

For Santa Claus costume, see note, p. 313.

See note on fireplace, p. 313.



THEIR CHRISTMAS PARTY

IN TWO ACTS

CHARACTERS

FATHER BROWNE.

MOTHER BROWNE.

AUNT JENNIE.

DICK } The little Brownes. (Eight and six years old.)
DOT }

MARY, the nurse.

JOHN, the man.

JIM } A newsboy and his sister, both ragged. (About
POLLY } the age of Dick and Dot.)

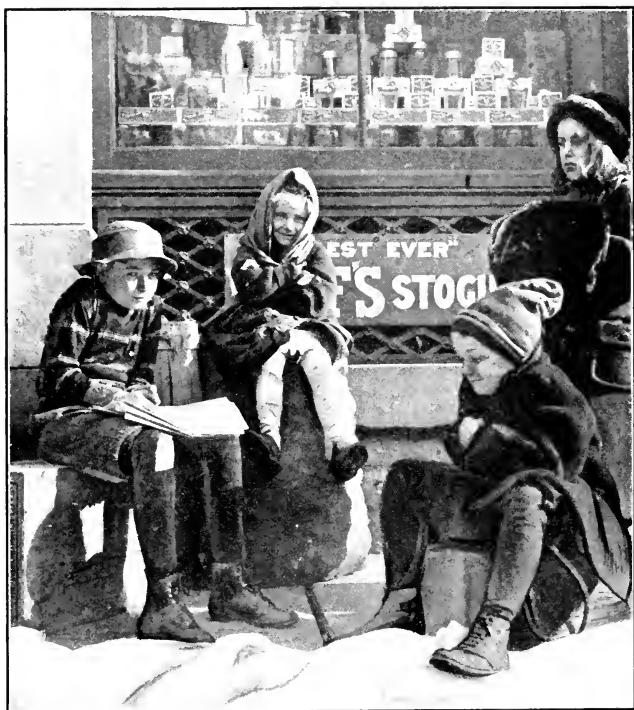
THE FIVE LITTLE BLAIRS.

THE TWO LITTLE GRAYS.

SALLIE LEE.

COOK'S SISTER'S CHILDREN.

And SANTA CLAUS.



THEIR CHRISTMAS PARTY

THEIR CHRISTMAS PARTY

ACT I

TIME: *Afternoon of the 24th of December.*

SCENE: *A street corner on a snowy day. Barrels and boxes in front of a small grocery store. Enter DICK and DOT, well wrapped up, dragging a sled.*

DICK. Whew! that's a dandy coast, but it's pretty hard work pulling up.

DOT. Let's sit down a minute and rest. [*They draw sled to left of stage and sit down side by side on it.*] I'm so tired. Oh, Dick, I thought we were going to run over that poor gray cat, didn't you?

DICK [*nodding*]. It's lucky for her that she knew how to jump. The Comet would have hit her sure! This rope needs tying tighter. [*Goes to front of sled and kneels down, fixing rope.*]

DOT [*looking around*]. It's so nice and quiet here. No big boys ever coast on this street. Big boys always bump into you.

DICK [*shaking his mitten at her*]. Now, Dot, that's just the very reason I don't like it. You don't know how much more fun it would be to have just lots and lots of boys on this track all the time, climbing up and whizzing down. I bet none of them could beat this old sled.

DOT [*doubtfully*]. Maybe it would be nice, but, Dick, I think it's such fun to have just us two.

DICK. That's just because you're a girl and don't

know. Come along, let's try the hill again. Shall we go over the bump?

DOT. No, I'm afraid. Let's start down here.

[*Exeunt.*]

[*Enter from Left, JIM and POLLY.*]

JIM. If you're very cold, Sister, we can go home right off now, but I've got four papers left, and I want awful bad to sell 'em, every one, so's I can take the money to Granny.

POLLY. No, I'm not so dreadful cold, Jim. And, 'sides, maybe Granny's not got home yet from work, and then you know we'd just have to sit on the doorstep and wait.

JIM. We'll stay right here. Folks will be going home soon, and lots of men pass this corner. Here's a nice box to sit on; I don't believe the store man will mind. You sit on that side, so, Polly, and I'll sit here, so, for the wind's blowing this way, and if I sit here it will hit me first, and I can keep it off o' you. [*They sit back to back on the box.*]

POLLY. Oh, Jim, I'm afraid you'll be cold.

JIM. Oh, no, I won't. [*Two men cross stage arm in arm.*] Here's your Times, Star, Evening Post. Last edition. [*Men shake their heads.*] [*Looking after men.*] Pshaw! Well, maybe the next feller'll want one. [*To POLLY.*] See, Polly, I can't be cold, I just stuff my hands in my pockets—— [*His hand comes through.*] No, that's the wrong place. I just stuff my hands in my pockets like this, and then I kick my heels like this. [*Kicks on box with his heels.*] That's very warming. And then I whistle. [*Whistles lively tune.*] If you just whistle you don't have time to think about the wind, see!

POLLY [*drums with her heels and tries to whistle*]. But it hurts to kick your heels, and I can't whistle.

JIM. I'll tell you what. Let's try singing. Perhaps that's just as warming. Let's sing Granny's Christmas song. [*They sing a verse of "God rest ye, merry gentlemen," or some other old-world carol.*]

POLLY. Jim, is to-morrow Christmas?

JIM [*gloomily*]. Yes, to-morrow's Christmas. [*Aside.*] And if somebody don't buy these papers pretty soon, I won't have enough pennies to get [*counts on his fingers*] that penny paper doll; nor the penny washtub, nor the jumping Jack, nor the paint box, 'cause that's three cents. [*Enter man.*] Here's your evenin' paper, sir! [*Man stops and takes one. Exit.*]

[*Enter DICK and DOT, cross stage, and sit down as before.*]

DOT. Wasn't that a nice coast, Dick?

DICK [*absently*]. Yes. [*Rests his chin in his hands and elbows on his knees.*] Dot, I do wish we lived in an orphan asylum.

DOT [*jumps*]. Oh-h! Why, Dicky Browne, you wouldn't have any papa nor mamma nor Aunt Jennie, nor anybody, nor anybody.

DICK. But just think what lots of brothers and sisters we'd have.

DOT. Well, you're all the brothers I want; 'nd I wouldn't give up Papa and Mamma for all the sisters in the world; so now.

DICK. Well, neither would I, but can't you see how much nicer times we would have if there was a lot of us, on holidays especially?

DOT. Well, I think we have an awfully good time, anyway. You said you liked Thanksgiving.

DICK. That was because of the dinner part. When we tried to play games and dance afterwards, what did we do? We played Hide the Thimble, and if I hid it there was only you to look, and of course you couldn't help finding it first. We had to play Going to Jerusalem with just one chair, and the two of us went around and around and around till we felt like the "Little Rid Hin" in John's story. I declare there aren't enough of us to play Puss-in-the-corner. Two children can't have any fun. [*Puts his head down on his arms.*]

DOT [*sighs*]. That's so.

DICK [*lifts up his head suddenly*]. And I'd just like to know what's the fun of coasting when you haven't anything to shout "clear the track" at, but ash barrels, and hens and cats that you can't run over anyway. I wish there were forty-'leven boys on the track this minute.

DOT. Well, I don't care about the track, but brothers and sisters are nice to play with. Wouldn't it be nice if there were two of you and two of me?

DICK. Two of us! I wish there were six of each of us. I wish I could go and live with the Ruggles's, in your story about the "Birds' Christmas Carol." There were nine of them and they only got washed about once a year. And folks weren't always saying, "Land! where did you get them dirty hands?"

DOT. That would be fun! We could play just as untidy games——

DICK. Don't talk about it, it makes me cross. [*Folds his arms, crosses his feet, and whistles something sad.* DOT gets out her handkerchief and spreads it in her lap.]

JIM [*softly*]. I say, Polly, that boy's got an awful nice sled.

POLLY. Just look at his sister's muff. [*Enter man.*]

JIM [*shouts*]. Buy a paper, sir! [*Man takes paper.*]

[*DOT turns and sees children, looks away, then back again, turns to DICK.*]

DOT. Dicky, are you sure you are warm enough?

DICK. Warm enough! How could I be cold with a great big coat like this one? I feel like a polar bear. [*Walks up and down to show size of his coat, then sits down. DOT turns and sees the children's ragged shoes.*]

DOT. But are your feet warm?

DICK. Of course, with boots on.

DOT [*sees POLLY examining holes in her mittens*]. But aren't there any holes in your mittens?

DICK. In my spick-span new mittens that Aunt Jennie made me? [*Holds them up.*] Dot, you're crazy! [*Catches her looking at the children; looks himself, and then walks around the sled to sit facing JIM and POLLY.*]

DOT *does the same.* All four stare in silence.] Hullo!

JIM. Hullo, yourself!

DICK. Are you the boy that my papa gets his papers of?

JIM. Don't know.

[*DOT walks decidedly over to POLLY.*]

DOT. Let me feel your hands. They're just like ice; I knew it. Put them right in here with mine. [*Kneels in front of POLLY and puts her hands in muff. DICK moves sled close to JIM and sits astride of it.*]

DICK. Have you sold all your papers?

JIM. No, I've got two left.

DICK. Isn't it lots of fun to sell papers and earn money?

JIM. I don't know,—not this kind of weather.

DICK. I think it would be fun. I wouldn't want to

sell 'em on Christmas. Do you have to work on Christmas day?

JIM. Not if I don't want to. I did go out last Christmas, but nobody much came along. I suppose they stayed at home to keep warm.

DOT. No, I guess Santa Claus was coming to see their little children, and they wanted to see him too. [*To POLLY.*] What do you want Santa Claus to bring you?

POLLY. Santa Claus hasn't ever been to our house.

DOT. What, hasn't ever been to your house!

DICK. Haven't you ever seen him?

JIM. No, she never saw him, but I saw a stuffed Santa Claus in a window once.

DICK. Why, he comes to our house every single year.

DOT. I thought he went to everybody's houses in this world.

JIM [*leaning toward DICK and speaking low*]. I get Polly presents when I get enough money.

DICK. But doesn't Santa Claus fill your stockings?

JIM. No, and he never goes to Nicky Smith's house, nor Eddy Warren's, nor Jakey White's. They told me so. Here comes another man. Post, sir? [*Man shakes his head.*]

POLLY. Jim got me some candy last Christmas, and Granny gave me a doll, only its head came off the next day.

JIM. That's an awful nice sled.

DICK. Haven't you got any sled?

JIM. No, but I coast on a board sometimes.

DICK. I'll let you try Comet. Don't you want to take Polly down?

DOT. Oh, yes, go; we'll take care of the papers.

DICK. Let's change places; we'll sell papers and you coast. And you must take our coats too. [*Pulls off his things, DOT following his example.*] Because the wind just whistles right through you, I tell you, when you go down that hill.

DOT. Oh, yes.

JIM. We're much obliged for the sled, but we can't take your things; you'll be cold.

DICK. No, we won't, and you must. [*Helps him on with his own coat.*] You see, you're cold now, and you won't have a good coast if you're not warm. Give me your cap. Here, take my mittens. Dot, take Polly's shawl.

DOT. Now, we'll sit right down here. Dick, you hold the papers.

JIM. Are you all fixed?

DICK and DOT. Oh, beautifully. Oh, thank you.

[JIM and POLLY go off.]

DICK [*calling*]. Put Polly on behind.

DOT. Mind the bump at the curbstone.

DICK. Oh, Dot, isn't this fun?

DOT. Yes, lots. Have you got the papers?

DICK. Yes, there are only two left to sell.

DOT. Let me get close up behind you, the way Polly did. Now you must drum with your heels, and whistle like Jim. [DICK *does so.*]

DICK. Here comes somebody. Now I'm going to call. Here's your evening papers, last edition!

[*Enter two men, stop and buy a paper.*]

FIRST MAN [*looking back*]. That's a queer-looking newsboy. Somehow he looks like a rich child.

SECOND MAN [*pulling him off*]. I can't see but the little scamp is ragged enough. Some of these newsboys

aren't so poverty-stricken as they make out, anyway. Come along. [*Exeunt.*]

DICK. I've seen that man somewhere.

DOT. I think he's been to see Papa. Wouldn't it be fun if Papa came along and bought a paper of you?

DICK. And didn't know me. What a circus! Wish he would.

DOT. There come Jim and Polly. Wave your paper at them.

DICK [*waving*]. Hurrah, Jim, I sold a paper.

[*Enter JIM and POLLY.*]

JIM. Good for you. It was fine!

POLLY. It was just grand!

DICK. Try it again. We like this, don't we, Dot?

DOT. Yes. Don't you want to go again, Polly?

JIM. Are you warm enough? honest Injun?

DOT. Yes, go on.

JIM. All right. [*Exeunt.*]

DICK. I knew Jim would think Comet was a boss sled. Don't you think Jim would be a nice brother, Dot?

DOT. Yes, if he washed his face. Polly would be nice for a sister, too.

DICK. We could all write letters to Santa Claus together. [*Drums with heels and whistles.*]

DOT [*after a pause, rubbing her nose*]. Well, if Santa Claus's nose ever feels like mine, it's no wonder it's red.

DICK [*squirming*]. Somehow, it's colder than I thought it was. The thermometer must be down to zero.

DOT. I'm sure it's nineteen below. I—I think a fire would feel real nice.

DICK. I'll take you home when they come up again.

I'm not very cold. I wonder if Jim ever flops his arms like a street car driver. Maybe that would make him warm. Try it, Dot. [*Both beat themselves with their arms.*]

DOT. I don't believe anything would make me warm.

DICK [*turning anxiously*]. Dot, do you want my handkerchief?

DOT. Oh, no, I'm not going to cry.

DICK. Well, I'm glad, for it's in my pocket that Jim's got on. [*Enter man.*]

MAN. Got a Times, boy?

DICK. Yes, sir, last one. [*Exit man. Enter JIM and POLLY.*] Sold the last paper, Jim. Here's the money. We've got to go home now. [*Changing coats.*] Jim, I think it's very queer about Santa Claus. Is your house hard to find?

JIM. No, it's just right down this street, there on Friendship Alley. We're awfully much obliged for the ride. The Comet's a beauty.

POLLY. I never was on a sled before.

DOT. Weren't you? We'll let you have ours again, sometime.

DICK and DOT. Good-night. [*Exeunt.*]

JIM. That's an awfully nice little chap, Polly.

POLLY. Why, Jim, he's 'most as big as you are.

JIM. Oh, well, he's little somehow. I take care of you and that makes me big. Let's go home to Granny. [*Takes her hand. Exeunt, singing another verse of their carol.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *Christmas morning.*

SCENE: *Sitting-room, with large old-fashioned fireplace* [back Center]. Toys scattered about. A small blackboard to left of fireplace. DICK and DOT sitting in little chairs. DICK, with a knife, whittling. DOT, with a doll. Both wear sprigs of holly.*

DOT. Everybody has given us such lovely presents. It couldn't be nicer, could it, Dick?

DICK [*sighing*]. I think it could be just a little nicer. It would be nicer if we had a lot of brothers and sisters to help us play with the soldiers and the blocks and the dolls and everything. Oh, I wish—I wish that just for this one day I could have a whole *roomful* of children to play with.

DOT. I'm afraid Jim and Polly aren't having as nice a Christmas as ours.

DICK [*shutting his knife*]. So am I. I don't think Friendship Alley's a very nice place to have to live.

DOT. I wish they could have a Christmas like ours. I'd like to give them some things. Anyway, I'd like to show them our presents.

DICK [*jumping up*]. Let's!

DOT. When?

DICK. Now, right off. And, Dot, don't you know they said they had never seen Santa Claus, either. It's 'most time for him to come. Let's go and bring them over to see him.

DOT. All right. He'll give them something, too.

* See note on Fireplace, p. 313.

DICK. We'll hide them so as to surprise everybody.

DOT. Will Papa and Mamma like it?

DICK. Of course they will. Papa always likes our surprises, and Mamma will, I know, because it would make her feel so sorry if she knew there was anybody in the world that wasn't happy on Christmas. She says that's the happiest day in the year, and everybody ought to be happy. So we won't make her sorry by telling her about it. We'll just make them happy too.

DOT. We can have them take off their things in the nursery, and then Jim can wash his face.

[Exeunt. Enter FATHER, with paper which he throws on table.]

FATHER. Well, the children seem to have grown tired of their new things already. I don't see what has come over that boy lately. He talks of nothing but big families. I suppose the sight of the five little Blair children across the way is tantalizing, and it certainly is lonely for the two little duds with nobody but grown-ups in the house. Their efforts to be a large party in themselves, to play games, on Thanksgiving day, were really laughable, but they were pathetic, too. If Julia had thought of it, we might have had a little Christmas party for them. It's a good deal of trouble for Santa Claus to climb down a chimney for just two children. *[Looks at his watch.]* The old gentleman ought to be here in about half an hour. I wonder if it's too late to get some children now? Mr. Blair might lend me his youngsters for an hour or so. It would be such a nice surprise for the children. I could hide them somewhere, and at a given signal have them come out. I'll just step across the way and see.

[Exit FATHER. Enter AUNT JENNY.]

AUNT. What a dreadful state the children have left this room in. That blessed boy! I knew he couldn't wait to try his new knife. His father would insist on giving it to him, though I'm sure it's dangerous. Here are his chips all over the floor, and Dot has had Dolly dressed and undressed a dozen times at least. [*Sits down by fire, laughing indulgently.*] The way those children have been talking the last few days is a puzzle! I can't think what started them. I never had but one brother myself, and I'm sure I was quite happy. What they want with ten brothers and sisters is beyond me. A dozen children in the house would be more than their father and Julia and I could stand, to say nothing of nurse and John. The two alone can think of quite enough mischief to drive the household crazy. I suppose our having so many friends when we were children made a difference. We never used to be alone at Christmas. After all, on holidays it would be forlorn. Too bad we didn't think of having a party. There are so many children who would think it a treat to come, too, who have no tree or Santa Claus at home. That little girl of Ellen Lee's must be all alone to-day. [*Gets up decidedly.*] I declare I'll just put on my hat and coat and go around there now and get her. It'll be such a nice surprise for the children.

[*Exit in haste. Enter MOTHER. Takes up doll, and sits down thoughtfully before the fire, rearranging doll's dress.*]

MOTHER. Dolly, you'd be surprised if you knew how badly I'm feeling! I think I've been a very stupid, unrealizing sort of a mother, not to plan something to make the children have a really *merry* Christmas, as well as a happy one. It would have been so easy to have a little

party of children here. Oh, Dolly, you know all about it better than I do myself, for didn't I just hear Dot confiding in you, and whispering in this little ear under your curls how she wished you were a real live sister to play with her? Now you see how I feel! Don't you see that if she had a hundred dolls, of wax or china or rags, she would still have a stupid Christmas? I haven't a doubt that you mean well, and you do fill a very large corner in a little girl's heart—I haven't got over my fondness for your race yet. [*Kisses the doll's curls.*] But you certainly are a trifle obstinate about responding to friendly advances. Poor children, it's so easy to give you pleasure! [*Lets doll fall in her lap.*] I might have had a nice, jolly, little . . . well, it's too late now. [*Sighs, then looks at her watch.*] No! I don't believe it is, after all. I still have time to go for little Jerry Gray and his sister. They are just the ones! The children love surprises so. I'll hurry——

[*Exit in haste. Enter MARY and JOHN.*
While they talk together they put the room to rights.

MARY. Well, it do beat all, how thim children can make a room look like so many pigs and chickens had been running through.

JOHN. Thru for you, an' it does.

MARY. An' what fer need they be wishin' there was tin of thim to mess the house up worse?

JOHN. An' did they do that, thin?

MARY. Sure they did. "Mary," says Dicky to me, "don't you wish that I was five little b'ys and Dot was five little girls? We do, we're so lonesome."

JOHN. An' that's what I heard them sayin' as I was a-carryin' up coal this morning. "I wish I had a whole

room full of brothers and sisters," says Dick. Faix! I wish I could give him some of mine, then. I've enough to spare.

MARY. 'Tis sort of lonesome like, now, ain't it, John? [*Hands on hips.*]

JOHN [*hands on hips*]. Yes, it is that. I wonder—— Say, Mary, me darlin', them three children of cook's sister's ain't going to have much Christmas. Why can't you and me smuggle them up here to the cupboard on the stairs, and when we comes up to help wid th' tree, we'll just give the word and they'll pop out and say, Merry Christmas. It'll be sort o' cheerful like, and Mistress is that kind-hearted she ain't going to care.

MARY. John, you have the brains of a elephant. I'll go right down and fetch 'em now. [*Exit.*]

JOHN. Poor children! They shall have some fun, that they shall. [*Re-enter MARY with children.*]

MARY. Well, would you look at 'em, John? Cook she dressed 'em all up in green ribbons, bless their hearts. Says I, "Sure to-day's not St. Patrick's day." "Well," says she, "what's fittin' one holiday is fittin' the next. It's a good color anyhow. Them's their best clothes." So I never touched 'em. I've told 'em about it, John. Now, just go right up in here, children.

JOHN. And when we say "Broomsticks!" out you bounces and shouts, "Merry Christmas!" Now, Mary, we've redd up, we'll just go below stairs. [*Exeunt.*]

[*Enter DICK and DOT with JIM and POLLY.*]

DOT. We're so glad you came, because we want to show you our things.

DICK. And now you can see Santa Claus.

JIM and POLLY. Oh-h-hh! We never saw nothin' like this before.

DICK. And I'm going to put my new necktie on you, because we want to be all dressed up for Santa Claus.

DOT *and* DICK. We've got on holly because it's Christmas.

POLLY. I've got on my clean apron. Will I do?

DOT. 'Course you will; I don't believe Santa Claus cares.

DICK. Here are my soldiers.

DOT. And this is my dolly.

DICK. And just look at my knife.

DOT. Where's my pincushion?

DICK. Oh, see our blackboard. Don't you want to draw on it, Jim?

JIM. I don't know how to draw.

DICK. Oh, make a man; it's very easy to make a man. [*Demonstrating.*] You just make his stomach and his head, and then put on the arms and legs.

DOT. See our books.

DICK. This is my new history. It's got a picture of Mr. Columbus finding the red Indians.

DOT. Oh, I hear somebody coming. You must hide straight off.

DICK. In the chimney is the best place. Jim, you go on this side and Polly on that. And look out for the fire. Remember when we say "Sleds!" you must come out.

DOT. Now.

[*FATHER puts his head in at the door.*]

FATHER. Oh, children, are you there? Don't you think you'd better go and have your hands and faces washed? Santa Claus likes clean faces, you know.

DICK *and* DOT. Yes, sir, right off. [*Exeunt.*]

[*Enter FATHER with five little Blairs.*]

FATHER. Now, children, quick, run right into the library here, and when I say "Holly!" you must run out and say, "Merry Christmas!"

[*Exit FATHER. Enter AUNT with SALLY LEE.*

AUNT. Sally, the best place for you to hide is here on the floor behind the blackboard. There, no one can see you. Now, when I say "Evergreen!" you must come out as we planned.

[*Exit AUNT. Enter MOTHER with two little Grays.*

MOTHER. Come right here, dears, behind this curtain. You won't have to wait long. And when I say "Mistletoe!" run out. I'll go and find Dick and Dot.

[*Exit.*

[*Enter DICK and DOT and place two low chairs by the fireplace. Both put their heads into the chimney.*

DICK and DOT. Are you all right?

JIM. Yes, if we don't have to stay too long.

POLLY. It's very nice and warm here.

[*Enter FATHER, MOTHER, AUNT, and MARY and JOHN, who stand by the door.*

FATHER. Children, what are you doing? [*Children come out confused.*]

MOTHER. Were you looking for Santa Claus?

AUNT. Couldn't you wait for him?

DICK. It's a whole year since we've seen him.

FATHER. I wonder if he's changed any.

DOT. Oh, I hope not.

FATHER. We all love Santa Claus, don't we? He makes us think of so many pleasant things. He always reminds me of——

FATHER.	Holly!	} All children [<i>rushing out</i>]: "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas!"
MOTHER.	Mistletoe!	
AUNT.	Evergreen!	
DICK } DOT }	Sleds!	
JOHN } MARY }	Broomsticks!	

DICK and DOT. Hurrah, hurrah! We're going to have a Christmas party, after all!

FATHER. I never was so surprised in all my life.

MOTHER. Nor the rest of us, either.

CHILDREN. Goody, goody! Santa Claus is coming!

FATHER. Three cheers for Santa Claus. All together!

ALL. Rah! Rah! Rah!

MOTHER. Santa Claus likes to have children quiet sometimes. It's almost time for him to come now. I know he loves music. Suppose we all sit down right where we are and sing. What shall we sing?

DOT. Let's sing——

[*All sing a Christmas carol.*]

FATHER. Listen, do you hear anything? [*Silence.*]

CHILDREN. No, no!

FATHER. Well, let's sing something about Santa Claus, and see if that will bring him. [*They sing a Santa Claus song.*]

[*Enter SANTA CLAUS through fireplace. Children all jump up and gather around him.*]

SANTA CLAUS. Whew! What a large party! Do you think my pack will hold out for so many?

CHILDREN [*dancing excitedly*]. Yes! Yes!

DICK Santa Claus, before you begin, I want to ask you a question. Here are Jim and Polly, and they have always wanted to see you, but you never went to their house, nor gave them any presents, and they say they know some more poor people that you never go to see. We thought you went everywhere and gave everybody presents! Why didn't you ever give anything to Jim and Polly? We don't think that's quite fair, Santa Claus!

SANTA CLAUS. I know, and I think I can explain to you. [*Recites.*]

'Tis true, my child, I can't but say
I have a very curious way
Of bringing presents to girls and boys
Who have least need of pretty toys,
And giving books, and dolls, and rings,
To those who already have such things.
'Tis done for a very curious reason,
Suggested by the Christmas season.
Should I make my gifts to those who need,
'Twould become a time of general greed,
When all would think, "What shall we get?"
"What shall we give?" they would quite forget.
So when I send my gifts to-day,
'Tis a hint "You have plenty to give away."
And then I leave some poor ones out,
That the richer may find, as they look about,
Their opportunities close at hand,
In every corner of the land.
My token to those who in plenty live
Is a gentle reminder, meaning,

GIVE.*

* Quoted from *St. Nicholas*, by courtesy of Tudor Jenks and The Century Company.

CHILDREN. Oh, yes, we see, and we'll try to remember.

SANTA CLAUS. That's right. Now, can't we have another song? I like to hear you singing. Let's have . . . [*Carol, and distribution of presents.**]

* See note on Tree, p. 314, and on Carols, p. 315.

NOTES ON COSTUME AND SCENERY

Ordinary costumes. Santa Claus (see note on costume, p. 313) should be taken by a man, but the other adult parts are for boys and girls from fourteen to eighteen. Two or three older boys enact the homeward-bound pedestrians who merely cross the stage in Act I, and Father Browne and John, in coats and hats, may be among these.

The groups of children who come in at the end range from the very smallest up to ten years.

If scenery is available, place grocery store in first scene, at the back, and keep the children well in the center. In changing the scene, time can be gained by setting the first scene in front of the interior, as very little space is needed for the first act.

If scenery is not to be used, set grocery store less conspicuously [*Right*], using screens and placing boxes and barrels before them.

THE CHRISTMAS BROWNIE

IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS

FATHER BIRD.

MOTHER BIRD.

KITTY

TED

MARJORIE

ROBIN

LITTLE ROSE

NURSE MAGGIE.

THE CHRISTMAS BROWNIE. (Boy of ten.)

And SANTA CLAUS.

}	The little Birds	{	About twelve years old.
			Boy of ten.
			Eight years old.
			Boy of seven.
			Little girl of six.

CHARACTERS IN TED'S DREAM

(Series of tableaux at back of stage)

- I. Jack Horner.
- II. Mrs. Santa Claus.
- III. When Santa was Young.
- IV. "Merry Christmas." (Little boy.)
- V. "No Christmas." (Little boy and girl.)
- VI. The Christmas Waits. (Four boys and four girls
from six to twelve years, who can sing.)

The other children in the "Dream" should not be over eight years old.



THE BROWNIE

THE CHRISTMAS BROWNIE

TIME: *Christmas Eve. The story begins at tea-time in the nursery, and ends on Christmas morning, the night being bridged over by TED's dream.*

SCENE: *Nursery, with fireplace,* across corner [Right], nursery pictures on the walls, and toys scattered about. The children seated on little chairs around a low table [L.], having just finished their tea—TED at one end, KITTY opposite him, MARJORIE and ROSE on one side [facing the audience], and ROBIN with his chair half turned away from the table. Curtain rises, showing the children singing a Christmas song, while the nurse goes in and out with a tray, clearing the table. The little girls sit with hands folded, KITTY sometimes helping the nurse, and the boys lounge comfortably in their chairs. When the song is ended, TED leans his elbows on the table.*

Any Christmas song will do. "Oh, Ring, Glad Bells" (from *Songs and Games for Little Ones* †) is a very good one.

KITTY. Oh, I do wish Papa and Mamma would get done their supper and come up here!

MARJORIE. Seems to me it takes twice as long to eat supper in the dining-room as it does up here in the nursery!

* See note on Fireplace, p. 313.

† See note on Carols, p. 315.

TED. Grown folks are so slow about it!

ROBIN. Guess they have more to eat, too.

NURSE. No, indeed, Master Robin, it's because they're polite and don't eat so fast!

MARJORIE. We do gobble just like Thanksgiving turkeys!

KITTY. Rosy-posy never does. [*Patting little ROSE.*]

TED. Pooh! Rosebud doesn't eat more'n a bite, anyway!

ROSE. Maggie, please untie my bib.

TED. I'll do it for you. [*Jumps up and unties it. The others take theirs off, and the nurse carries them all away.*]

KITTY. Oh, I'm so excited! I don't believe I can sleep a wink.

MARJORIE. Don't you wish to-morrow would come quick?

BOYS. You bet!

MARJORIE. Santa Claus!

KITTY. Christmas Tree!

ROBIN. Sleds!

TED. Candy!

ROBIN. Big drums!

BOYS [*drumming with fists on table*]. B-r-r-rum!
B-r-rum! Brum! Brum! Brum!

KITTY [*covering her ears*]. Mercy! what a racket!
Do be quiet, boys!

ROSE [*shaking her finger*]. Santa Claus'll hear you
'way up at the North Pole!

TED. I hope he's started on his travels before this, or
he won't get here for a week.

ROBIN. Wouldn't you like to ride with him in his
old sleigh, though?

TED. And help him fill the stockings!

MARJORIE. I don't think I'd like going down chimneys much.

KITTY. What a good chimney-sweep Santa Claus must make.

ROBIN [*going to look up chimney*]. Oh, isn't it 'most time to hang up the stockings? [*Comes to stand beside MARJORIE.*]

KITTY. Maggie has gone to get them, I think.

ROSE. But, Sister, how will Santa Claus know which is which?

KITTY. He'll know yours the minute he sees it, Pet.

ROSE. Will he?

TED. Sure!

ROBIN. Oh, I say, Ted, wouldn't it be a joke if he got 'em all mixed up, and put my things in Marjorie's stocking, and yours in Kitty's!

KITTY. He won't. He's such a wise old fellow that he always knows, somehow.

MARJORIE. Well, I should think it would be lots easier if we marked them! It must be dreadfully hard for him to remember.

TED. I'll tell you what! S'posing we write a list of the things we want him to bring, too?

ROBIN. Good for you, Ted. Then he won't have to remember all the letters we've been writing him.

MARJORIE. Give us some paper, quick, Kitty!

KITTY [*gets paper and pencils from mantel, TED helping her*]. If Santa Claus has to remember all the letters all the children in the world write him every year, shouldn't you think his head must ache? [*Divides paper among children. All sit at table and write.*]

TED. Put your name at the top.

MARJORIE. And the thing you want most, next.

ROSE [*to KITTY*]. Will Santa Claus mind if I print mine?

KITTY. No, indeed. He likes printing.

[All write busily for a few moments.]

ROBIN. I'm done. Look at that! [*Holds it up.*]

KITTY. My! what a long list!

ROSE. Oh-h-h! Santa Claus'll think you're greedy!

ROBIN. I don't expect him to give me all those things. That's just so he can choose.

KITTY. Here come Papa and Mamma. Now, Ted, go get the stockings.

[Exit TED. Enter FATHER and MOTHER, children crowding around them.]

KITTY. Mamma, we've made lists——

ROBIN. Of the things we want——

KITTY. And we're going to pin them on our stockings——

MARJORIE. Because we thought we ought to save poor Santa Claus all the trouble we could.

MOTHER. What thoughtful children! I'm sure Santa Claus will appreciate it.

ROBIN. Now, sit down and write your lists, quick!

FATHER [*laughing*]. Santa Claus will be frightened by such an array of wants. [*FATHER and MOTHER sit down and write.*]

FATHER. Do you think his pack will hold out?

ROBIN [*with scorn*]. 'Course it will! That pack hasn't any bottom at all.

MARJORIE and ROSE [*taking hands and dancing*]. Oh, goody! goody! goody!

[Enter TED, with MAGGIE, who gives stock-

ings to the children and helps them to pin on the lists.

FATHER. I don't see my sock anywhere. This surely isn't mine! [*Holds up a long stocking.*]

MARJORIE. Oh, Papa, it would be too mean to hang up one of your horrid little ones!

ROBIN. No, sir!

TED. Socks are no good on Christmas Eve. We've got one of Mamma's for you.

FATHER [*laughing*]. Oh, I see. Very well. But it's lucky they're to be marked. Santa Claus would never in the world recognize this one.

MOTHER [*to ROBIN, who is stretching his stocking as much as possible*]. Robin, what are you doing?

ROBIN. Just making it bigger. Now, come along. Papa's on the first hook. [*All go to fireplace and hang stockings, NURSE helping ROSE. All stand back to gaze.*]

KITTY. Don't they make a fine show?

BOYS. Hurrah! Hurrah! [*Children all clap.*]

MOTHER. Softly, children! [*To NURSE.*] Maggie, they will never go to sleep if they are so excited! [*To children.*] Sit down here a little while and sing some of your Christmas songs before you go to bed.

KITTY. Oh, no, Mamma, let Rosebud sing her song for us, and we'll be quiet.

MOTHER. Very well, dear.

TED. Let her stand on the table, so everybody can hear. Come, Rosy! [*TED and KITTY help her up. FATHER stands by fire, MARJORIE with her arm about MOTHER, NURSE in door, KITTY sits on a corner of the table, ROBIN in a chair, TED leaning over the back of it,*

ROSE sings, "*In another land and time.*" (From "*Songs for Little Children.*") * When the song is ended, MOTHER comes forward, kisses ROSE, and lifts her down.]

MOTHER. Now, Maggie, take her to bed. [NURSE leads her out.]

FATHER. Yes, it's high time you all went. Good-night, all of you!

CHILDREN. Good-night, Papa! Good-night, Mamma!

ROBIN [*runs to fireplace, and bends over, shouting*]. Good-night, Santa Claus!

FATHER. Now, scamper, every one of you! [*Chases them out, MOTHER follows. Stage darkened somewhat. Enter the BROWNIE suddenly, through fireplace. Stands (Center) for a moment, finger on lips, then rushes to door, peeps out, comes back, looks under table, and then, as if satisfied, goes to stockings, and stands examining them, feet wide apart, and hands on hips. Comes to FATHER'S, measures it with his hands, then lifts it by the toe, and points to it, grinning. Doubles up with laughter. Suddenly puts his hand to his ear, and bends over, listening. Rushes to door, runs back, and vanishes in chimney. Enter TED.*]

TED [*softly*]. I just can't go to bed yet. Robin went to sleep the very minute he got into bed. Don't see how he could. Maggie thinks I'm all nicely tucked in, and she's gone downstairs. [*Goes to fireplace and looks up chimney.*] I do wish I could catch Santa Claus. No signs of him yet, and I don't hear the sleigh-bells. I think I'll just sit down and wait. [*Crosses to his own chair, and sits facing audience, with one elbow on table.*] I believe I could give Santa Claus a few pointers, any-

* See p. 315.

way. [BROWNIE *puts his head out of fireplace, and then shows himself entirely, gradually creeping nearer and nearer TED, as if irresistibly drawn by his remarks.*] He does give people pretty much what they ask for, but [*slowly*] if he just stopped a minute to think about it, he'd find out what silly things they do think they want, sometimes. But [*sighs*] he's getting so old that he doesn't find it out at all. [BROWNIE, *behind him, raises his hands in horror, then shakes his fist at TED.*] I really think it would be a good thing for Santa Claus to choose one person in each family to help him out,—with the planning, anyway, if he doesn't like to have anyone else fill the stockings. S'posing he chose me! I could help him a lot! [BROWNIE *springs excitedly on the table, and bends over TED, shaking his fist in his face.*]

TED [*jumps up, and stands off a little way*]. Wow! Wha—wha—— Who are you?

BROWNIE [*folds his arms and looks contemptuously down on TED*]. Who is this impertinent snip of a boy who dares to insinuate that my master, Santa Claus, is too old and decrepit to do his work any longer?

TED. Indeed, indeed, I didn't say that!

BROWNIE [*wrathfully*]. What did you say, then? It sounded very much like it. [*Shakes his head fiercely.*]

TED. I—I—I just said—that I think he makes mistakes sometimes.

BROWNIE [*sitting down cross-legged on the table*]. Very well, we'll just have this matter settled at once. Sit down, now, and let me hear what you have to say. [TED *backs away from his chair.*] No, that won't do. Sit down, I tell you. [TED *reluctantly obeys, pulling his chair to a safe distance, and sitting astride of it.*] Now then, young sir, will you tell me what complaints you

have to register against your last year's stocking? Wasn't everything in it that you asked for?

TED [*anxious to appease*]. Oh, yes! and more, too!

BROWNIE. And wasn't everything in it in perfect order? Was anything broken?

TED [*emphatically*]. No! Everything was just out of sight!

BROWNIE. And weren't all the cracks stuffed tight with candy and nuts and raisins?

TED. I should say they were!

BROWNIE. Then I'd like to know the meaning of this discontent! You twentieth-century boys are a set of ungrateful young scamps, who get the best of everything, and then complain of it, and break it up in three days' time. Santa Claus is spoiling you, *I say!* Boys a hundred years ago were thankful for the slates and school-books we gave them, and the girls were happy enough over corncob dolls. Now you must have steam-engines, and motors, and automobiles, and dolls that walk and talk, and are so full of cogs and wheels that no real flesh-and-blood little girl could love them at all. I tell you, in all my thousand years of existence, I have never met anything so grasping as the modern children! [*Talks so loud and gesticulates so wildly that TED backs away again.*]

TED [*meekly*]. Please, Mr.—Mr. Brownie, I didn't mean that! Honest Injun, I didn't!

BROWNIE. Well, then, explain yourself!

TED. I—I—I was just thinking that people ask Santa Claus for such f-foolish things that it's a wonder he gives them anything at all.

BROWNIE. Foolish! I should think they were!

TED. And if there was anybody that could tell

Santa Claus about it, it would save him a lot of trouble.

BROWNIE. And you think you could manage things better, do you?

TED. I didn't say that,—I said I would like to help.

BROWNIE [*scratches his nose, scowling very hard*]. See here. Suppose I let you try. Santa Claus is unusually busy to-night, and is sending a great number of his Brownies out to fill stockings. I was to look out for this house, among several hundred others, and I—a—well, I have a fancy that I should enjoy letting you help.

TED. Oh, *will* you, really?

BROWNIE [*jumping off table*]. Yes, I have about made up my mind to let you into the secrets of the business. You can learn a few things, I think.

TED. Good for you! Thank you, ever so much.

BROWNIE. Never mind. Wait till to-morrow before you thank me. [*Grins meaningly.*] Now, let's be quick about this—the time is getting short. We'll just go over these lists together, and you can tell me what improvements to make. [*They go to the first stocking.*]

TED. Shall I get you a paper to write things down, so you won't forget?

BROWNIE [*shouts angrily*]. Forget!

TED. Yes, I thought maybe since you're so old——

BROWNIE. That shows all you know about it! Of course there's some excuse for *your* forgetting, since your memory is only ten years long, but *mine's* a thousand years long, and I never forget anything! Come, read me this list.

TED [*reading*]. "Encyclopedia Britannica." Now Papa can't possibly want that, because he knows all about everything already. And besides, I heard Mamma say

she hadn't a bit of room for any more books. "New knife." He did say his old one was dull, but it's altogether too sharp for Robin and me to use, and that's sharp enough for anybody! "New pocketbook." Why, he said the other day he hadn't any money to put into it, so I don't see what good that'll do him. "Key ring." If he has that, he'll put *all* the keys on it, and there won't be any for Robin and me to drop lead through. [*Turns to the BROWNIE.*] So, you see, there isn't a thing that he really wants on that list.

BROWNIE. Oh, certainly not!

TED. Now, Mamma's. "Half a dozen new bibs." Bibs! They don't belong on her list. She can't have that! "Little rocking-chair." Now, if she has a *little* rocking-chair, there won't be any room for us on the arms of it,—that wouldn't do at all. "A rose vase." All her vases are broken now, and if she had another, Maggie'd just smash it, too, so what's the use in giving it to her? [*Turns to list.*] What's all this at the bottom? "Most of all, five *good* boys and girls to live with till next Christmas"! Jiminy Christopher, how *can* she want five more?

BROWNIE [*significantly*]. She didn't say "*more*."

TED [*claps his hand over his mouth*]. Oh! . . . P'r'aps she didn't mean that! P'r'aps she meant *us*! [*Stares thoughtfully before him.*]

BROWNIE. Hurry up! Look at this one.

TED. That's Kitty's. Let's see. "A boy doll and a girl doll." Now, don't you think Kitty's altogether too big for dolls? I suppose *little* girls must have dolls, but they're terribly silly things. "Half a Dozen Girls." That's nothing but an old girl's book. Give her stories about fights and Indians and bears to read to us. "Pa-

per dolls." There it is again. "Napkin ring." Now, that's the only sensible thing she's got down. . . . This one's mine. I won't stop to read that, because I only put down the things I've *got* to have. Let's see if I can read Robin's. [*Puzzles over it.*]

BROWNIE [*reading TED'S list*]. "Boxing-gloves. Baseball. Roller-coaster. Skates. Boots. Marbles."

TED. Oh, now I see what it is. "Rubber boots." He doesn't need those. I'm going to have some new ones, and my others aren't much too big for him. "Marbles." He's got more marbles now 'n' any boy I know. "Top. Kite"—this isn't the time of year for those things. Never mind, I'll tell you what he wants in a minute. Now, Margie. "Dolls" again. She's got three dozen if she's got one! "Music-box." Pshaw! they just go and smash right away. "Paints." She'd paint up all the chairs and tables in the house and nobody would like it a bit. "Little stove"—that might be nice,—but I'm afraid she'd burn herself. You see, *she* hasn't got anything good on her list, either. Now, Rose comes last of all. [*Looks at ROSE'S list a moment.*] Well, I guess Rosebud ought to have everything she's asked for. [*Turns to BROWNIE, and the two walk away from the fire.*] Now, didn't I tell you how it was? People want such silly things! Now, I'll tell you what to bring instead. [*Puts his arm across BROWNIE'S shoulder, and whispers in his ear, pointing to one stocking after another.*] . . . Now, I guess that's all. It was awfully good of you to let me help, and I know they'll all be pleased. [*Walks around table, sits with his back to audience. Stretches his arms above his head, and yawns aloud.*] I really believe I could go to sleep now. [*Drops his head on his hands. BROWNIE waves his wand above*

TED, *who gradually sinks down, head on arms, fast asleep.*]

BROWNIE. Now I guess he's in for a good night's sleep. Little scamp! He ought to have some kind of a trick played on him, but Santa Claus forbids any pranks on Christmas Eve. [*Crosses to fireplace.*] What *shall* I do about these stockings, anyway? These poor children are going to be dreadfully disappointed to-morrow if I keep my promise to that scallywag, Ted. Perhaps I'd better telephone Santa Claus about it. [*Takes up the toe of a stocking and speaks through it, moving it from mouth to ear as he speaks or listens.*] Hello! Hello, there! North Pole! Please connect me with Santa Claus. . . . Hello, is that you, Santa? I want to consult you about some doubtful business. . . . Yes, sir, Mr. Bird's house. . . . His boy is making a dreadful mess with these stockings. . . . He wants them all filled with presents for himself. . . . What's that you say? Let him try it? . . . Be a good lesson for him? . . . All right, sir! Thank you. Any trouble with icebergs? No? . . . That's good. . . . All right, good-by! [*Drops stocking.*] Well, I must see it through, then, I suppose. [*Takes down the stockings and carries them into the chimney two at a time. When the last is carried out, he brings them back in the same order, filled. To avoid delay, a double set is prepared, the BROWNIE leaving the empty ones and bringing the full ones instead.*] Well, he's pretty generous to himself, anyway. And he thinks it's all for their good! [*Walks over and stands looking at TED.*] I'll just say good-night to you, now, young man. . . . No! before I go, I believe I'll give you a few Christmas dreams. [*Waves his wand and walks slowly to back of stage. Scene darkened, lights thrown on sec-*

ondary stage, where the curtains part and reveal tableaux as the BROWNIE'S song calls for them. He stands at back, unseen. Raise curtain before the end of verse describing picture.]*

BROWNIE'S SONG

Air: "Fly, Little Birds." †

Come, Christmas dreams, from Fairyland!
Come, at the beckoning of my wand.
'Tis Christmas Eve, so bring with you
Bright holly-berries and mistletoe, too.

- I. Now first we have, all full of glee,
A youth well known to you and me.
His fondest hopes have now become
Reality—he's found a plum!

Tableau: Jack Horner.

- II. Dear Santa Claus we've always known,
But Mrs. Santa, full of fun,
Helps her good husband every year,
Or else he'd never get done, I fear.

Tableau: Mrs. Santa Claus.

- III. When Santa Claus was young and gay,
And full of fun, like boys to-day,
He learned that youth's the key to joy,
And so, you see, he's still a boy.

Tableau: When Santa Claus was young.

- IV. This little lad, with happy smile,
Of toys and candies has a pile.

* See note, p. 119.

† "Songs and Games for Little Ones" (p. 89). See Suggestions for Carols, p. 315.

Good Santa filled his stocking, so—
A Merry Christmas he has, I know.

Tableau: "Merry Christmas."

- V. But there are children not far away,
Who scarce know the meaning of Christmas Day.
O share with these, ye whose plenteous store
Can fill a dozen homes or more.

Tableau: "No Christmas."

- VI. The Christmas Waits, in times of old,
Sang carols sweet, though the night was cold,
And wandered thus, from door to door,
Till morning dawned, in days of yore.

Tableau: The Christmas Waits. [*The curtain does not rise until the verse is ended, then shows empty stage. The WAITS begin their carol behind the scenes, marching single file till the first couple is opposite the opening, when they turn, join hands, and enter two by two. The march of the WAITS may be as simple or as elaborate as desired, or as the size of the stage permits. Or they may walk to the footlights, and stand there during a part of their song. The smallest couple should, of course, lead. The stage, darkened for the earlier tableaux, should be made bright for this march. At the end of the march, the WAITS pass out as they entered, and the back curtain is dropped.**]

[*The BROWNIE comes forward and stands by TED, tapping him with the wand.*

BROWNIE. Merry Christmas, Ted! It has come at last! [*Rushes away and vanishes in chimney.*]

* Carol used by Waits: "Noël! Noël! the Christ is born" (p. 62, "Songs and Games for Little Ones"). No better marching song can be found. See Suggestions for Carols, p. 315.

TED [*sits up, stretches, yawns, rubs his eyes, and looks around*]. Why! I do believe I've slept here all night! [*Sits on table.*] And, my! maybe you think I haven't been dreaming! Guess I'll go see what time it is. [*Goes to door, turns, and sees stockings.*] Jiminy Christmas, just look at those stockings! [*Exit.*]

[*Enter NURSE with duster. Sees stockings.*]

NURSE. Well, well! did I ever! Santa Claus has been pretty good to them this year.

MARJORIE [*without, calling*]. Maggie! Maggie! Mamma says we may have our stockings right off now. Please bring them to us, quick!

NURSE. That I will, Miss Margie, fast as ever I can! [*Lifts them down.*] Crammed full, I declare! and heavy!—heavy as that good-for-nothing Bridget's cake!

[*Exit NURSE. Enter BROWNIE, cautiously following her to door.*]

BROWNIE [*peeping out*]. I've got to see the end of this experiment! [*Flies back to chimney and hides.*]

[*Enter NURSE.*]

NURSE [*dusting*]. Old Santa Claus is mighty good to these children. Fills up stockings like those, and then comes himself and brings a tree on top of all that. They must be pets of his.

[*Enter TED dejectedly, sits down, and drops his head on his arms.*]

NURSE. Dear, dear! whatever is the matter, Master Ted?

TED [*darkly*]. Oh, go downstairs, Maggie, and you'll see!

NURSE. Mercy on us! what's happened? [*Shakes him.*]

TED. Oh, dear, oh, dear! the children don't like their stockings!

NURSE. What's that you say?

TED [*very despairingly*]. Oh, go away! Go downstairs, and you'll see.

NURSE [*in tragic tones*]. Such a thing never happened in this blessed house before! [*Rushes out.*]

TED [*sitting up*]. Oh, dear, what shall I do about it? It's just dreadful, and it's all my fault. [*BROWNIE pokes his head out.*] They don't want my things, either, or I'd be glad to give them all I got. [*Puts his head down again. Enter KITTY, MARJORIE, and ROBIN, disconsolately. Girls sit by fire, ROBIN at table.*]

ROBIN. Well, Kitty, do you think Santa Claus couldn't *read* our letters?

KITTY. I don't know *what* to think!

MARJORIE. Well, how could he make such dreadful mistakes?

ROBIN [*rubbing his eyes*]. Didn't bring one single thing I asked for—didn't bring a thing but books and puzzles!

KITTY [*elbows on knees and chin in hands*]. Brought me a box of fishing tackle—and I just *hate* to fish!

MARJORIE [*putting handkerchief to eyes*]. He gave me big rubber boots—and I don't *like* to wade in the brook—I'm afraid of *snakes*!

[*TED, in the depths of woe, slips to the floor and rests his head on his chair.*]

ROBIN. Don't see why Ted feels so badly—Santa Claus gave him everything he asked for!

KITTY. Yes, and Rosy's stocking was all right. I'm glad she got what she wanted—bless her little heart!

MARJORIE [*suddenly*]. Oh, Kitty, what shall we do

when Santa Claus comes and asks us how we liked them?

KITTY. I don't care—I *can't* thank him for those horrid old fish-hooks!

ROBIN [*with decision*]. I'm just going to tell him he can take his puzzles and give them to some other boy!

[*Enter FATHER and MOTHER, sharing the general gloom.*]

FATHER [*in a puzzled tone*]. It's the most singular thing!

MOTHER. I never heard of Santa Claus making a mistake before.

FATHER. Two empty cigar boxes in my stocking!

TED [*aside, dismally*]. Those were for Robin and me to make lanterns of!

FATHER. I'm sure I don't know who wants those!

MOTHER. And a roll of the muslin I make sails of for the boys' boats, in my stocking! With some old rags!

TED [*aside again*]. Kite-tails!

FATHER. Well, Santa Claus has certainly lost his mind!

MOTHER. Well, he'll be here very soon, and perhaps we shall find out what these queer presents mean. [*Looks at her watch.*] Come, children, you must get your faces washed, and look as bright as you can for him.

FATHER. Perhaps, after all, it's just some joke of his.

[*Exeunt all but TED.*]

TED [*jumping up*]. I know! I'll see Santa Claus first, and *beg* him to take back these things—— [*Runs to fireplace, calling softly.*] Oh, Santa Claus! Santa Claus! *do* hurry! [*Sleigh bells in distance.*] Oh, Santa Claus!

SANTA CLAUS [*up chimney*]. Who's that I hear calling me?

TED. It's me—me—me! Ted Bird! Oh, *please* hurry!

SANTA CLAUS. Yes, yes! But this chimney's such a tight squeeze! [*Loud jingling.*]

TED. Oh, please be quiet! Please don't make such a noise!

[*Enter SANTA CLAUS, through fireplace, bowing low to TED.*]

SANTA CLAUS. Not make a noise? I'd just like to know who has a better right to make a noise than I?

TED. Oh, yes, I know, but I *must* speak to you before the others come in! [*Pulls up a chair, stands on it, and puts his arm across SANTA CLAUS' shoulders.*]

SANTA CLAUS. What's all this secrecy about?

TED. It's just this, Santa Claus. The Brownie let me help him last night, and I told him such nice things to put in the stockings, and now nobody likes them, and everything's in a terrible muddle!

SANTA CLAUS. Oho! So you've been finding out that it isn't so easy, after all, to give people what they want, have you?

TED. But, Santa Claus, I truly thought they would like it, and now it's just dreadful! What shall I do? If you'll only give them what they *do* want, you can take back all my things! I wish you would! Don't you think you could, just for this once? [*ROSE runs in.*]

ROSE. Oh, Santa Claus! Santa Claus! [*Exit, calling.*] Come, Papa, come, Mamma, here's Santa Claus! Robin! Marjorie! Kitty! [*Enter all. The older children hang back, ROSE runs to SANTA CLAUS and stands by him.*]

FATHER [*shaking hands with SANTA CLAUS*]. How do you do, sir, how do you do?

MOTHER. We're very glad to see you again, Santa Claus. [*Motions others to come, NURSE also urging them in pantomime.*]

SANTA CLAUS [*patting ROSE's head, and looking at other children*]. I hear there are some children here who weren't pleased with what I brought them. How's this? [*Children turn away, and hang their heads in embarrassment.*]

SANTA CLAUS [*to FATHER*]. What does this mean? Can you explain it, Mr. Bird?

FATHER. Well—a—you see, the stockings really weren't filled after your usual thoughtful manner.

SANTA CLAUS [*bursts into a loud laugh, at which the children turn in injured astonishment*]. Well, well! That's a good joke!

KITTY [*in an injured tone*]. We didn't think it was a joke at all, Santa Claus.

SANTA CLAUS. Well, my dear, you will when I tell you about it. You see, I had a new helper, last night, and it wasn't to be expected that one so new to the business wouldn't make some mistakes. Well, this one made a good many,—[*to TED*] didn't he?

TED [*dolefully*]. I should think he did! He didn't do anything else at all!

SANTA CLAUS. But when he found out about it, he felt very badly, indeed,—[*to TED*] didn't he?

TED. He never felt worse in his life!

SANTA CLAUS. So he came to me and begged me to fix the matter for him, and I've agreed to do it. He never suspected that I knew about it before he told me, but I did know, all the time, and so I've come prepared

to make it up to you for all the trouble Ted caused——

ALL. *Ted!*

SANTA CLAUS. Yes, Ted. [*With pretended fierceness.*] He meddled with my business last night.

CHILDREN [*shocked*]. Oh, Santa Claus!

SANTA CLAUS. But I'm going to forgive him, because I think he learned a good many things about Christmas while he was at it. And I never *could* bear to see anyone unhappy when I pay my yearly call, so come along, children, come, Father and Mother Bird, and we'll see if we can't find something to suit you all under the branches of my Tree! *

[*Unveiling of Christmas Tree follows. Children mingle with audience, and general distribution of presents takes place.*]

* See note on Tree, p. 314, and Tree-song, p. 315.

NOTES ON COSTUME, SETTING, AND PRESENTATION

For the parents, nurse, and children, ordinary costumes. Adult parts taken by older girls and boy. Ages of children as indicated in cast.

BROWNIE. Wears a close-fitting suit of dark brown canton flannel, with trimmings of lighter brown or tan—a small collar, cuffs, and a belt with long points. The shoes are long, with points turned up at the toes, and the cap, close-fitting, hides the hair and covers the neck at the back, but allows the ears to show. It is finished with a point (stuffed and wired to keep it upright) which comes from the back and curves above the head.

All the Brownie's actions and motions should be startlingly sudden and swift. He should alternate between absolute stillness, and a quickness like a wild bird's.

A great deal of humor can be put into the scene of disappointment over the stockings, especially by the older girls and boy who play the adult parts.

Prepare a double set of stockings, one empty, the other filled; the Brownie carries out the empty ones, and returns with the full ones. As these are not examined on the stage, they may be stuffed with anything that is most convenient. Have in readiness a row of small hooks on the mantel, for hanging them.

For **SANTA CLAUS'** costume, see note, p. 313.

COSTUMES IN THE "DREAM"

JACK HORNER. May be dressed, if desired, in Kate Greenaway style, but ordinary costume is all that is required. Jack recites the nursery rhyme, at the end pulling a large plum out of a brown paper pie.

MRS. SANTA CLAUS. A plump little girl in a long dark dress, white apron and kerchief, big white cap with wide frill, and large spectacles on her nose. One hand holds the corner of her apron full of toys, the other is stretched out as if dispensing gifts to the children.

YOUNG SANTA CLAUS. Little boy in boots, thick coat, toboggan cap and mittens, well covered with white cotton snow, and sprinkled at the last moment with diamond dust. He stands with one hand on a tall red chimney, the other just lifting his heavy pack of toys. Make chimney by covering a long dry-goods box with red, and painting bricks with ordinary black ink. Set on stage for this tableau.

"Merry Christmas." Little boy, daintily dressed, his arms full of toys, with a drum, a horse, etc., piled at his feet.

"No Christmas." A very ragged boy and girl. The boy stands with his left arm around his little sister, his right hand holding hers. The child looks up into his face confidingly.

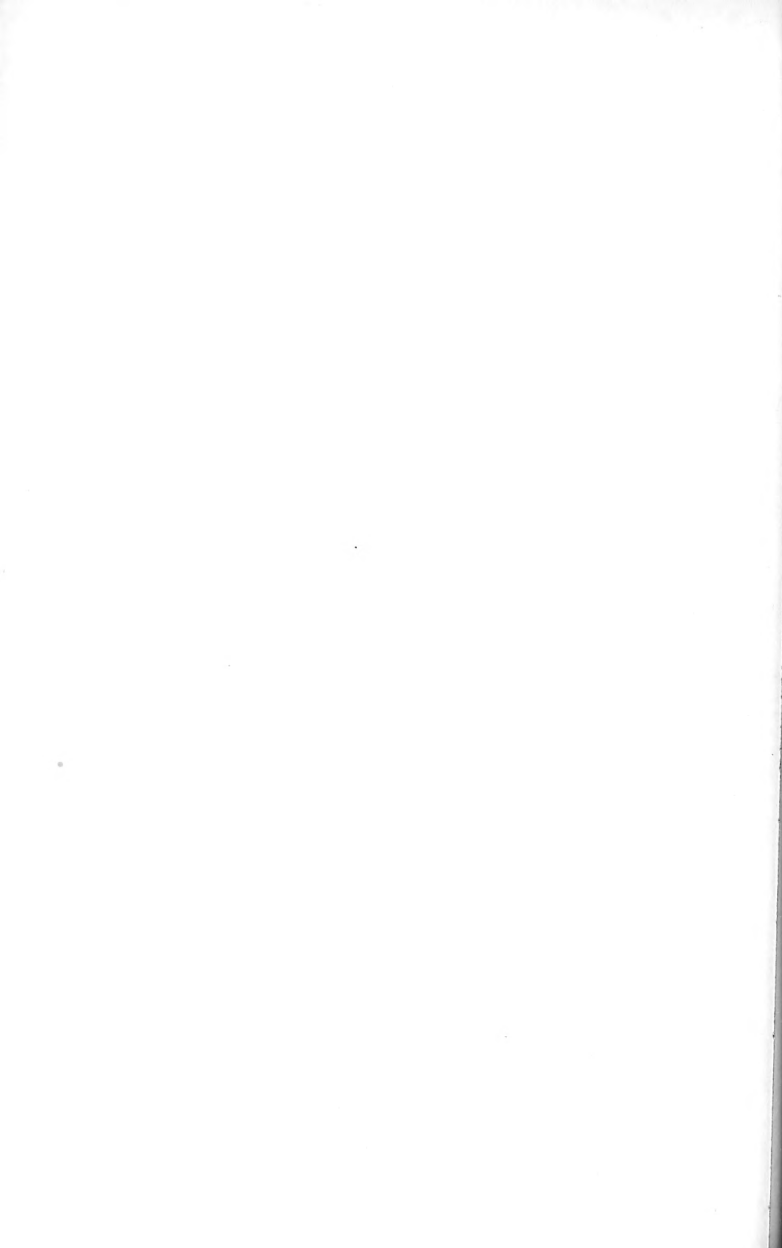
The Christmas Waits. Four boys and four girls between six and twelve years of age. These children may be elaborately dressed, after Seventeenth Century pictures, or very simply—the girls in white kerchiefs and caps, the boys in short capes of any dull black material, with steeple hats, made of cardboard covered with black. These

children should have good voices for the carol, "Noël! Noël! the Christ is born!"* March as described in text.

These tableaux are arranged on a small stage or platform behind scene at back, upon which the light is concentrated, the main stage being darkened. Properties should be in readiness, and the children must be taught to take their poses quickly and without noise.

For this small stage or platform a kindergarten table serves excellently, covered with dark green, a step being placed for the use of the Waits in their march. If practicable, a curtain made to match the scene, and rise for the tableaux, may be used, but plain curtains, hung like portières, and parting in the center, are also effective. Attention should not in any way be drawn to this curtain, in order that the first tableau may come as a surprise to the audience. The point of chief importance is that, whatever the arrangement of the curtain, it should work silently and without hitch.

* See note, p. 315.



A PURITAN CHRISTMAS

IN TWO ACTS

CHARACTERS

MISTRESS DELIGHT GOODSPEEDE.

ROGER

MYLES

NATHAN

PATIENCE

PRUDENCE

} Her children.

EAGLEFEATHER, son of an Indian chief.

ELDER JONATHAN HOPKINS

DEACON WILLIAM PORTER

GOODMAN JOHN TURNER

DOMINIE PETER COBB

GILBERT APPLETON, a hunter

MISTRESS SUBMIT WELLS

MISTRESS PRAISEVER PORTER

DESIRE PORTER

REUBEN TURNER

GERSHOM PORTER

JARED PERKINS

JANE PORTER

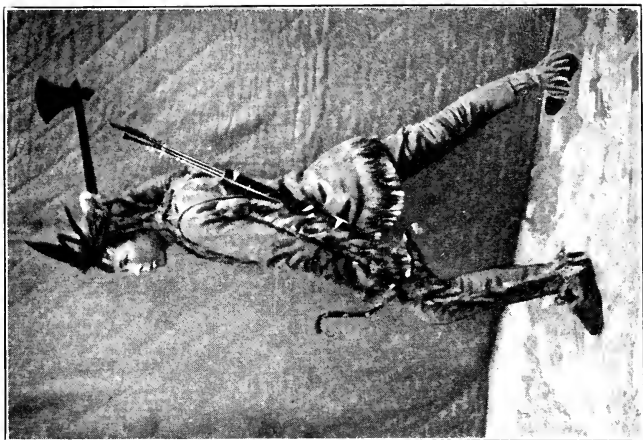
PRISCILLA WELLS

} Colonists

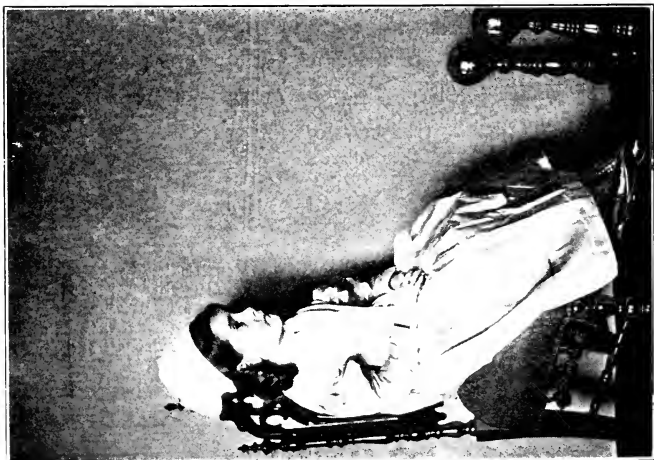
} and

} Children

*The action takes place in a small New England vil-
lage, not far from Boston, in the early days of the
colonies.*



EAGLEFEATHER



PRUDENCE

A PURITAN CHRISTMAS

Suggested by a story in *St. Nicholas* for December, 1880, by
S. J. Prichard.*

ACT I

TIME: *Evening of December 18th.*

SCENE: *Kitchen in MISTRESS GOODSPEEDE'S cottage, a simple and bare little room. Open fireplace † [R.], with exit beside it supposed to lead to loft. Back R., door; L., window, opening upon a desolate winter scene. L., door, leading to another chamber. Down L., a spinning-wheel. Furniture, a few plain chairs and stools, and a settle. By the window a table where little PRUDENCE and PATIENCE are washing the supper dishes. PATIENCE stands upon a stool in order to reach the dishpan more easily, PRUDENCE wipes the dishes and lays them on the table.*

PATIENCE [*severely*]. Prudence, if thee's not very careful, I know thee'll drop the platter!

PRUDENCE. Oh, no! Patience, I'm being very careful. I wouldn't let it drop for anything. It's Mother's very best platter, too.

PATIENCE. And if thee broke it, who knows if dear Mother could ever get a new one? She hath told me many a time she brought it with her from Old England,

* By courtesy of Miss K. A. Prichard and The Century Company.

† See note on Fireplace, p. 313.

and she saith the like cannot be found here—even in Boston town.

PRUDENCE [*gives it an admiring look, then lays it cautiously on the table*]. I'm sure it's the most beautiful platter that ever was seen. Are there many more dishes, Patience, dear?

PATIENCE [*in a motherly tone*]. No. Poor little maid, I fear me thou'rt very weary. Here—just these cups, and I'll help thee. [*Gets down from stool and helps to wipe one or two cups.*] Where are the boys, I wonder? You and I, Prudence, can never, never reach to put the dishes away on the shelf.

PRUDENCE. No, but brother Roger or Myles can do it. Mother says they grow like tall weeds.

PATIENCE. And the parson says they are brave striplings. [*Sighs.*] I would I were tall and strong. Then I should never be afraid of——

PRUDENCE [*looks fearfully over her shoulder*]. Afraid of *what*, Patience?

PATIENCE [*putting her arm around PRUDENCE*]. Oh, never mind, Prudence, dear, not afraid of, of—*anything*.

PRUDENCE [*pushes her back and shakes her finger*]. I know, Patience, thee was going to say—Indians! Oh, Patience, doesn't thee wish Mother'd come home? [*Lays her head on PATIENCE's shoulder. MYLES and NATHAN pass the window.*]

PATIENCE. Never mind, sister, here come Myles and Nathan. [*Enter the boys.*] Myles, has thee seen Roger?

NATHAN. Roger has gone to fetch our Mother home.

PRUDENCE [*going to table*]. Oh, Myles, won't thee please put the dishes up for us? Patience and I are far too little. [*NATHAN and PRUDENCE carry dishes one at*

a time to MYLES, who puts them on mantel. PATIENCE wrings out her dishcloth.]

MYLES. Where is Mother, Patience?

PATIENCE. Mistress Submit Wells hath a fever, and after supper Mother went to see if there was aught she could do to help.

NATHAN [*looking out of the window*]. I see Mother and Roger coming up the hill now.

PATIENCE. Quick, Nathan! Empty the pan for us! [PATIENCE opens the door for NATHAN, who carries pan out. PATIENCE hangs up dishcloth in haste.] Mother must find everything neat when she comes.

[*Re-enter NATHAN, putting pan in cupboard or under table.*]

MYLES [*mockingly*]. Thou art a great housewife, Patience.

PRUDENCE [*joyfully*]. Here they are!

[*Enter MOTHER and ROGER. PRUDENCE, PATIENCE, and NATHAN gather about her while she takes off her cape and follow her to the door (L.) when she puts it away. ROGER, hanging up his hat, goes to fire.*]

PATIENCE. How did thee find Mistress Wells, Mother?

MOTHER. Much better to-night, daughter.

PRUDENCE [*catching at her skirts*]. Thou'lt not go back, then, Mother?

MOTHER. No, little Prudence, not to-night.

ROGER. It's fearsome cold out. Do stir the fire, Myles. [*Warms his hands, while MYLES stirs fire.*]

NATHAN. Then come sit down with us by the fire, Mother. Thee surely won't work any more to-night?

MOTHER. I am willing, Nathan, but I must be knit-

ting. With three great lads who wear out so many stockings, I am kept more than busy, even if the good parson did not exhort us never to be idle. [*Exit and re-enter with knitting.*]

PATIENCE [*drawing up her MOTHER's chair and arranging stools*]. Here, Mother, here's thy big chair. Prudence and I will get our stools. Oh, Roger, do get out of the way! Make haste! Thee's such a giant thee'll block the firelight out entirely.

[*ROGER gets up and stands before the fire, while the MOTHER sits down, PRUDENCE beside her with a corncob doll and PATIENCE at her knee, also knitting. MYLES sits with his back against the chimney and NATHAN lies at full length before the fire.*]

ROGER [*good-humoredly*]. What a pity thee didn't name that child *Impatience*, Mother. It would become her so much better.

MOTHER [*while PATIENCE bends her face low over her knitting*]. Does thee think it would make it any easier for her to be good, Roger?

ROGER. Well, I'm glad thou gavest us good sober English names. I'm sure 'twould never help me to be good if I had been named Hate-Evil, like Elder Hopkins' son. Think of it—Hate-Evil Hopkins!

MYLES. And if Father had called me Love-the-Truth or Have-Courage, instead of naming me after our fine Captain Standish, I know I never would have tried half so hard to be brave and truthful.

MOTHER. That was what Father cared for, Myles, whatever thy name might have been.

ROGER. One of us is fitly named, at any rate, Mother,

and that is thyself, Mistress Delight Goodspeede!
[*Bows.*]

PATIENCE. Yes, Mother *is* our Delight.

MYLES. And everybody's else, too.

MOTHER [*laughing*]. Take care, children, you will make me vain, and then the parson will preach a whole sermon about vanity, and call out in the midst of it, "Delight Goodspeede, stand forth!"

ROGER. How terrible! [*All laugh.*]

NATHAN. He calleth vanity a light and shallow thing, but I'll warrant me he would turn his hour-glass at the least four times while he discoursed upon it.

MYLES. More terrible still!

[*All laugh again. A knock at the door.*

ROGER *goes to answer it*, NATHAN *sits up with interest*, and PRUDENCE, *who has been walking her corncob doll up and down, rushes to her MOTHER's chair.*

ROGER [*his hand on the lock*]. Who knocks?

INDIAN [*without*]. Eaglefeather!

ROGER [*turning to his MOTHER*]. Mother, 'tis the Indian boy you helped when he was wounded last winter. May I let him in?

MOTHER. He hath always been friendly. Open for him, Roger.

ROGER [*opening the door*]. Come in, Eaglefeather! Thou'rt right welcome.

[*Enter INDIAN, bow in hand. MYLES and NATHAN go to him.*

MOTHER. What does he want, Roger? Mayhap he is hungry.

ROGER [*pointing to his mouth*]. Hungry, Eaglefeather? Want something to eat? Bread?

INDIAN [*shakes his head*]. No hungry. Braves go hunt. [*Draws his bow.*] Kill much, much, much deer. [*Spreads out his arms.*] No hungry; cold. [*Folds his arms and shivers.*] Can warm? [*Boys bring him to fire.*]

MOTHER. Yes, indeed; make room for him, boys.

MYLES. He can stay as long as he likes, mayn't he, Mother?

MOTHER [*smiles and nods at the boy*]. Yes, we know he is our friend. We trust him.

NATHAN. Doesn't thee remember how he taught us to shoot, and make baskets for thee and the girls?

INDIAN. Hmph! Eaglefeather teach young brave much more some day. Many, many new thing.

NATHAN. Oh, that is good news. What things, Eaglefeather?

INDIAN. Eaglefeather not tell. Eaglefeather show, to-morrow. Tired now. March long, long time.

MOTHER. Yes, poor lad. Let him rest now, boys.

[INDIAN *lies before fire*, ROGER and MYLES *as before*, NATHAN *behind MOTHER'S chair*.]

ROGER. Thou'rt always the one to think of making folks comfortable, Mother. What would Mistress Wells say if she saw Eaglefeather here now?

MYLES. He never would be beside *her* kitchen fire.

NATHAN. Not if he was frozen stiff.

MOTHER. For shame, boys; Mistress Wells hath been very kind to us.

PATIENCE. I think she is a very sour-visaged woman, and I can't see why thee wants to help her.

[MOTHER *gazes thoughtfully into the fire*.]

ROGER [*watching her*]. I know what Mother is thinking of!

MOTHER. Tell us, then, Roger, if thou be a wizard.

ROGER. Mother is thinking that in Old England this is Yule-tide——

MOTHER. Verily, I believe thou *art* a wizard, Roger, for thou'st guessed aright!

MYLES *and* NATHAN. Tell us about the Yule-tide, Mother.

PRUDENCE. Is *this* the Christmas day, Mother?

ROGER. No, Prudence. It's the twenty-fifth that is Christmas. Isn't it, Mother?

MYLES. Just a week from to-day?

MOTHER. Yes, children, just a week from to-day it will be Christmas in Old England.

PATIENCE. But why did Mistress Wells make thee think of Christmas?

MOTHER. 'Twas what Myles said about Mistress Wells and Eaglefeather here. 'Twas because Christmas in my father's home in Old England was the time of all others when people did kind and friendly deeds, when poor folks came to the houses of rich men without fear of being driven away, and our homes were open to all who needed food and warmth.

PRUDENCE [*wonderingly*]. Why, then, Mother, I think it must have been like heaven!

NATHAN. Mother, doesn't thee sometimes wish we were all back in England once more?

MOTHER [*earnestly*]. Never wish that, my son.

MYLES. Not after all the bitter cold winters and hardships here, Mother?

MOTHER. 'Tis the very hardships we have endured

that will build up a new and better England for us here, Myles—— But the Old Christmas was a happy time.

[EAGLEFEATHER, *who has been sleeping, sits up, and from this point listens intently.*

ROGER. Won't thee tell us more about it, then?

MOTHER. I've told thee many times already, Roger, how the great Yule-log was brought in and lighted on Christmas Eve—such a monster log that it would burn until Twelfth Night. We always saved a bit of it, then, to light the next year's log. The old folks said that was for luck. All the young folks went out into the forest to gather the Christmas greens, holly, mistletoe, and long festoons of ground pine for wreaths. Ah, it was merry work, and the great hall in my father's house was a brave sight when we had decked it in the green. And on Christmas day we had our Christmas bough covered with shining candles and bright gifts for each other.

PRUDENCE. How beautiful, Mother!

MOTHER. And we were awakened at dawning by the poor children of the village singing their joyous carols beneath our windows.

MYLES. How I wish I could hear them!

ROGER. The singing in our meeting on the Sabbath isn't very joyful, is it, Myles?

MYLES. Beshrew me if 'tis. This is the way the elders and deacons stand and sing. [MYLES and ROGER stand side by side, eyes closed and hands folded before them, droning an old psalm tune.]*

* As the boys would hardly have been permitted to finish their song, the mother may leave the room before they begin, coming back to reprove them sharply when it is over.

Tune: "Windsor."

My days consume away like Smoak

Mine anguish is so great.

My bones are not unlike a hearth

Parched and dry with heat.

Such is my grief I little else

Can do but sigh and groan.

So wasted is my flesh I'm left

Nothing but skin and bone.

Like th' Owl and Pelican that dwell

In desarts out of sight

I sadly do bemoan myself

In solitude delight.

The Ashes I rowl in when I eat

Are tasted with my bread

And with my drink are mixed the tears

I plentifully shed.

MOTHER [*rising*]. Roger and Myles, silence! I will not have this wicked mocking of our good elders. Haven't you heard the parson tell the story of how the bears ate the children who mocked Elisha?

ROGER. Forgive us, Mother, we meant no disrespect.

MYLES. But, verily, the sound of the singing maketh me almost as sad as the sight of the bears could.

NATHAN. But, Mother, why do the good fathers never allow us to have a Christmas?

ROGER. There can be no wrong in the things thou'st told us. Peace and good will and neighborliness.

MOTHER. But that was not all, Roger. With the feasting and merriment came much that the good Puritan Fathers did well to abolish.

PRUDENCE [*stands at MOTHER's knee*]. But, Mother, isn't a birthday always a happy day? [MOTHER *nods*

and smiles.] Then I should think the Lord Christ's birthday would be the very happiest day of all, and the good parson would like to have us sing and be joyful and glad.

MOTHER [*kisses her*]. Thou'rt too little to understand it yet, my Prudence. [*Rises.*] Come, we have sat too long with our talking. If our candles are not soon out, the tithing-man will be tapping at our door and reproving us. [*Leads the two little girls and NATHAN to door (L.)*]. Come, children. Myles, see that the fire is safe. Roger, is the door fast? [*MYLES and ROGER attend to the fire and the door.*]

INDIAN. Must Eaglefeather go now?

MOTHER. Does thee think, lad, that savage though thou art, I would drive thee out into the bitter night? No, there is too much Yule-tide in our hearts for that! I have no bed for thee, but lay thee down by the fire and welcome. [*Begins to wind the clock.*] Boys, bring in some straw for a bed—— Stay a moment. Straw will not do. A chance spark from the fire might light it, and burn the house above our heads. There is an old mat in the shed without. See if you can find it.

[*Exeunt all three boys; MOTHER takes down candles from mantel and slowly extinguishes one; holds the other in her hand, absently snuffing it. Stands facing audience.*]

MOTHER [*musingly*]. I told little Prudence she was too young to understand, yet with my years, am I quite sure that I understand it myself? No, the good Fathers can never crush and kill the loving Christmas spirit. [*Enter boys, quietly arranging mat, on which INDIAN stretches himself. ROGER goes to fasten door.*] Why should little children *not* be joyous and glad on the holy

day? Why should not I *help* them to celebrate it? [*Hesitates, then firmly and decidedly.*] I believe—I *will* do it! Boys, come here. [*Boys come to her side.* REUBEN TURNER and GERSHOM PORTER *pass window, glance in curiously, then bend close, listening to all that is said.*] Roger, what would thee and Myles say to a Christmas bough of our very own?

MYLES. Oh, Mother!

ROGER. Does thee mean truly, Mother?

MOTHER. Of a truth I do mean it, Roger.

ROGER. But, Mother, they will persecute thee——

MYLES. And drive us all into the wilderness——

ROGER. And with Father away on his ship, who could take care of thee?

MOTHER. I have come into one wilderness before, Myles. I am not afraid.

ROGER. But how can we do it, Mother?

MOTHER. I will go up to Boston town to-morrow—I can easily walk there and back again before 'tis dusk—and buy what little things I may for gifts. I hear that a ship has but now come into port.

MYLES. Doesn't thee wish it was Father's vessel, Roger?

ROGER. *Then* wouldn't we have a Christmas!

MOTHER. 'Twill be many a weary month before Father's ship returns, I fear. But whatever this bark may be, she hath surely brought some small trinkets that will do for us. I'll find them and bring them home with me. Then on the day before Christmas thou and Myles must go into the woods and cut a small evergreen, as perfect a one as you can find. At dark on Christmas Eve you can bring it home, and when the children are in bed we will dress it. Then, early on Christmas dawn, before

the neighbors are stirring, we will light it and wake the little ones.

ROGER. But, Mother, they will surely find us out!

MYLES. That Reuben Turner is always spying upon us. And so is Gershom Porter. [*Boys at window dodge below the sill.*]

ROGER. And, Mother, they think thou art only half a Puritan now, because thou canst sometimes smile and art not always stern and sour like the rest.

MYLES. And they say thou art vain and frivolous because thou keep'st brazen fire-dogs and candlesticks instead of iron ones.

ROGER. And dost not dress thy daughters in solemn black.

MOTHER [*laughing*]. Do they say so? What a list of sins! [*Seriously.*] With thee and Myles to help me I am not afraid. We will have our Christmas bough—no, not a bough, but a whole *tree*—if we needs must light it at midnight and cover the window with blankets! Now get quickly to bed in the loft. 'Tis shocking late!

[*All turn to go, boys, R., MOTHER to door (L.).*]

MYLES [*running after her*]. Mother, Mother! won't thee teach us some Christmas carols, some *real* joyful ones—so I can forget about those bears?

MOTHER. Yes, yes, Myles. Now go quickly. This shall be the first Christmas in New England.

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *Before dawn of December 25th.*

SCENE: *Same as before. Stage quite dark except for firelight. Window covered with a blanket. Lights high on one side at back to represent moonlight when door is opened. Enter MOTHER [L.] with a lighted candle. Goes to door [R.]*

MOTHER [*calling*]. Roger! Myles! Make haste. [*Looks at clock, arranges fire, examines blanket hurriedly.*]

MYLES [*softly*]. We're coming, Mother. [*Enter MYLES and ROGER (R.).*]

ROGER. Are the others waked yet, Mother?

MOTHER. Yes, they are dressing. Quickly now, bring in the tree whilst I see if they need help. [*Exit (L.), leaving candle on mantel. Boys open outer door.*]

ROGER. How cold it is. See, Myles, the moon hath not yet set.

MYLES. Yes, yes. Come, Roger. [*Disappear (L.).*]

[REUBEN TURNER and GERSHOM PORTER
*at door, look cautiously in, then peer
around after the boys.*]

REUBEN [*softly*]. I see naught of any Christmas bough.

GERSHOM. Yet we surely heard them planning—
How angry the parson would be. I believe he would
even drive them away like the Quakers.

REUBEN. My father bade me look and bring him
word if what they said was true.

GERSHOM. Beshrew me, if they haven't covered the
window so that none may see them.

[MYLES and ROGER heard returning with exclamations "Have a care!" "Gently now!" etc. REUBEN and GERSHOM hide themselves without. Enter ROGER and MYLES with the tree already decked and fastened in a small wooden box, which they place in center of stage. Their backs turned, REUBEN and GERSHOM appear again at door, hold up their hands in horror, whisper together, and make signs of caution. Watch until MOTHER appears, then they vanish.

MYLES. There: we got it in quite safely, Roger. Dost think the Christmas boughs in England could have been prettier?

ROGER [*at door*]. Mother, we're ready now.

[*Enter MOTHER, taking candle again.*

MOTHER. Roger, Roger! shut the door at once, careless boy! Art mad? [ROGER *fastens door.*] The children are nearly ready and grow impatient. Make torches, both of you, and help me to light the candles.

[*Boys take splinters of wood from the fireplace and all go about the tree, lighting candles, arranging gifts more firmly, etc., while PATIENCE and PRUDENCE, without, sing "Waken, Christian Children."*

WAKEN, CHRISTIAN CHILDREN *

(From "Christmas Carols New and Old," Novello & Company.)

Waken, Christian children,
Up, and let us sing,
With glad voice, the praises
Of our new-born King.

* See note on Carols, p. 315.

Come, nor fear to seek Him,
Children though we be;
Once He said of children,
"Let them come to Me."

In a manger lowly,
Sleeps the Heavenly Child;
O'er Him fondly bendeth
Mary, Mother mild.

Haste we then to welcome,
With a joyous lay,
Christ, the King of Glory,
Born for us to-day.

(There are additional verses, and this hymn is to be found in various collections. A slightly different version is in Eleanor Smith's "Songs for Little Children," Part I.)

NATHAN [*without*]. Can't we come now, Mother?

MOTHER. One moment, children!

PATIENCE. It grows light, Mother. I'm afeared.
Mustn't we hasten?

MOTHER. Presently, presently! Is all ready, Roger?

MYLES. Yes, every candle.

MOTHER [*going to door (L.)*]. Come, now!

[*Enter NATHAN, PATIENCE, and PRUDENCE (L.), the girls singing first verse of their song.*]

PATIENCE [*breaking off*]. Oh, Mother!

NATHAN. How beautiful!

PRUDENCE. Oh, Mother, it feels like a dream!

MOTHER [*bending over her and leading her near*].
It is no dream, little daughter. Come near and see.

[*PRUDENCE timidly touches one branch with her finger.*]

PRUDENCE [*turning quickly and looking up to her MOTHER*]. Oh! it is real!

MYLES. Of course it is real. A real Christmas Tree.

ROGER [*folding his arms*]. Now I feel like a real Englishman!

NATHAN. Is this like the boughs thee remembers when thee was a little girl, Mother?

MOTHER. As much like as I could make it, Nathan. Except that I like this one even better.

PATIENCE. Oh, see the pretty presents! Oh, did Eaglefeather make these lovely baskets for us?

MYLES. Yes, and that's why he wouldn't let thee see what he was working on.

NATHAN. But where *is* Eaglefeather, Myles?

ROGER. We can't think where he is. He didn't come back last night.

PATIENCE. Oh, I don't want him to miss it!

MYLES. Hark! [*A bob-white is heard without.*] That's his whistle now.

MOTHER. Open cautiously, Myles.

[*MYLES and ROGER open door a little and close it as soon as the Indian has slipped through. PATIENCE and PRUDENCE run to draw him to the tree.*]

PATIENCE. See, Eaglefeather! Just see our Christmas Tree!

PRUDENCE. Isn't it *beautiful*, Eaglefeather?

INDIAN. Beautiful! Eaglefeather think like many stars! [*Points to candles, then touches something shining.*] Like sun shining on snow fields.

MYLES. Now, Mother, can't we sing our carol?

MOTHER. Yes, Myles, and then it will be more than ever like Old England.

[*All sing "Come Ye Lofty." At the end of second verse a sound of great knocking, shouting, and calls of "Open! Open! Mistress Goodspeede."* PATIENCE and PRUDENCE *hide behind their* MOTHER, NATHAN *stands at her side, MYLES and ROGER seize sticks, and EAGLEFEATHER draws a small tomahawk.*

PATIENCE and PRUDENCE. 'Tis Indians!

ROGER. 'Tis no Indians, 'tis the colonists!

MYLES. They've found us out!

[*Noise continues.*

TURNER and PORTER. Open! open there!

MISTRESS WELLS. I see the light——

DESIRE PORTER. It shines through the cracks here——

DOMINIE COBB. Verily none need hope to conceal evil!

TURNER [*knocking louder*]. Open! open!

MISTRESS PORTER. Shut in like wolves——

GERSHOM. Yea—like wolves in a cage——

REUBEN. I told thee the window was covered.

JARED. Mayhap the house is afire!

ELDER HOPKINS. Hold, friends! [*Silence without.*]

Mistress Goodspeede, in the name of the Governor I command you to open for us!

ROGER [*looking to his MOTHER*]. Must I, Mother?

MOTHER [*huskily*]. Open for them, Roger,

[*ROGER opens the door and all but GILBERT APPLETON press in. Chorus of scandalized exclamations, "Oh, oh!"*

PORTER. What is the meaning of this, woman?

DOMINIE COBB. Do not attempt to deceive us!

TURNER. Answer.

MISTRESS WELLS. She hath not a word to say for herself.

MISTRESS PORTER. Ah! we always knew she was not one of the elect!

REUBEN. And they have even one of the hateful savages with them!

GERSHOM. Who would harbor the wretches?

DESIRE [*pulling her mother's sleeve*]. But, Mother, see how pretty it all is!

PRISCILLA. Oh, the beautiful tree! And gifts, too!

JANE. I would it were my little tree. Doesn't thee wish so, Desire?

DOMINIE COBB. Dost see, woman, how swiftly thy ungodly example doth work to corrupt these wenches?

MISTRESS PORTER. Silence, Desire! [*She and MISTRESS WELLS try to hustle the children out of sight of the tree.*]

ELDER HOPKINS. Speak, woman, and tell us the meaning of this.

PATIENCE [*timidly*]. Please, sir, 'tis—'tis—'tis a Christmas Tree!

PORTER. We knew it!

TURNER. Aye, my son Reuben hath told us. He heard them speaking of it not a week since.

PORTER. And Gershom, too—they have kept good watch upon these evil-doers.

MYLES [*angrily, to REUBEN*]. So thou wast listening at the window. *Sneak!*

REUBEN [*blustering*]. And may not the King's subject walk upon the King's highway, Sir Cock-sparrow?

ROGER [*shaking his fist at boys*]. Methinks 'twill take

the King's soldiers to protect thee when once we catch thee——

GERSHOM. We'll show thee, thou blusterer, if we be not as free as thou!

[TURNER and PORTER seize REUBEN and GERSHOM and draw them back.]

MOTHER [*sternly, touching ROGER's shoulder*]. Peace, Roger and Myles. Is this the Christmas spirit we talked of but now?

ELDER HOPKINS [*severely*]. Woman, dost thou forget that we fled from England for this very cause, that we might escape and save our children from just such sinful folly as this? How darest thou, with these baubles and fripperies, bring temptation into our very midst? I know of no punishment too severe for such evil examples! Not the ducking-stool, nor the stocks, nor even banishment itself—— [*Shakes his finger threateningly, at the same time going a step nearer to her.* Enter GILBERT APPLETON, remaining in background.]

EAGLEFEATHER [*springing before MISTRESS DELIGHT with lifted tomahawk*]. Stop! stop! No hurt good Squaw. Listen! Me tell. Me Eaglefeather. Father big chief—Bald Eagle. She good, kind squaw. Take Eaglefeather in, feed, make warm, make hurt foot well. Teach Eaglefeather be good Indian. Eaglefeather go home camp. All braves say "This night go burn village." Eaglefeather find Bald Eagle. Say, "Not burn village. Good people. Indian's friend. Good squaw. Kind to Eaglefeather." Bald Eagle listen. Eaglefeather tell about Tree. Say this Christmas Day. Good Day. Nobody hurt nobody. Bald Eagle listen. Say tell braves. Not let braves burn village. Now, now! Not hurt kind squaw! [*Folds his arms proudly.*]

GILBERT APPLETON [*coming forward*]. Every word the lad says is true, sir!

ALL. Gilbert Appleton! What does he mean! How does thee know?

GILBERT. Because I was there. Good friends and neighbors, you all know that I, Gilbert Appleton, have been much among the savages. I know their speech, and their ways. Bald Eagle's tribe have always seemed friendly, but two days ago, when I was hunting with my match-lock near their camp, they made a prisoner of me and kept me there until just now. What Eaglefeather here hath told you is true. They would have burned the village if he had not begged the chief for the sake of Mistress Delight's great kindness to spare it. Good neighbors, 'tis my belief that this little Christmas tree hath saved us all! [*During his story all hang upon his words, drawing close and shuddering at the thought of a massacre, and sighing with relief at the end.*]

ALL. Strange! Wonderful! Did'st ever hear the like!

GILBERT. And, furthermore, the savages, who meant to make me guide them by the quickest way into our village, were moved to set me free at midnight and I have but now made my way back to you!

TURNER. Unheard-of forbearance!

DOMINIE COBB. Can we credit our ears!

MISTRESS WELLS. 'Tis like a miracle!

MISTRESS DELIGHT. 'Tis not so strange, either. We do not, we cannot know how much power even a very little good will and friendliness may have. I but thought to make my children happy, and because I loved my dear home in Old England I told them of customs there.

PRUDENCE. Mother, I would like to tell the good Elder something.

PATIENCE [*aside*]. He will only say thou art a forward wench, Prudence.

PRUDENCE. Will he, Mother? Will he frown and say, "Children should be seen and not heard"?

ELDER HOPKINS. Nay, my little maid. I will listen gladly.

[PRUDENCE *goes to him and puts her hands in his.*

PRUDENCE [*earnestly*]. We didn't think it could be wrong, good Elder. Mother said it was the Lord's birthday, and we couldn't help being glad about that, could we? And Mother taught us a song about it.

ELDER HOPKINS. Then will you sing it for us, little maids?

[PRUDENCE and PATIENCE, *hand in hand, sing their carol once more, while MYLES and ROGER go to REUBEN TURNER and GERSHOM PORTER and in pantomime apologize and shake hands with them.*

MISTRESS PORTER. Good friends, these little maids and their song do touch my heart.

TURNER. Truly, when we sought to bring truth and righteousness to the new land, I fear we were forgetting charity.

JARED. Was Christmas like this in Old England?

JANE. My Mother would never tell me of it.

PRISCILLA. I would it were so here!

PATIENCE. Mother made the tree for us, but we'd like to give you all something from it. May we, Mother?

MOTHER. We will gladly share it if the good Elder will forgive any harm we may have done.

ELDER HOPKINS. Mistress Delight, I have been thinking that perhaps we have grown over hard and stern.

[Unhindered now, the children draw close to the little tree.]

DEACON PORTER. There was much that was good in the old ways, after all.

ELDER HOPKINS. I will take a sprig in memory of the happy Christmases in Old England.

MISTRESS WELLS. Perhaps we may e'en keep what was good in the old ways here in this New England. I'll take a bit of green, too.

ALL THE OTHERS. And I, too. And I!

MISTRESS DELIGHT. For the sake of the happy Christmases of old, and the homes we left, and more than all for the sake of the very first Christmas Day of all, let us sing one of the dear old carols we have loved so long.

ELDER HOPKINS. Willingly, Mistress Delight.

*[All sing "Come Ye Lofty," * and while singing come forward and take bits of green from the Tree, which GILBERT APPLETON, REUBEN TURNER, and ROGER cut for them.]*

CURTAIN

* See note on Carols, p. 316.

NOTES ON COSTUME AND STAGING

Grown people, whose parts are taken by boys and girls from seventeen to twenty, and children, are dressed alike—men and boys in knee-trousers, coats with square white collars and cuffs, large belt- and shoe-buckles, broad-brimmed felt hats, with crowns high and flat. If the costumes are to be fully carried out, all should wear wigs, cropped round. Or they may be worn by the Elders only.

Women and girls wear plain dark-colored dresses, with rather full skirts, the children's as long as their mothers'. White kerchiefs, capes, and hoods, of dark colors with bright scarlet or gray-blue linings. The hoods are large and loose, with the edge turned back, giving color about the face. Mistress Delight, Patience, and Prudence wear white caps instead of the hoods.

Pictures of Puritan costumes are easily found in the Perry or Brown collections.

These costumes are best made of canton or outing flannel. Buckles can be made of cardboard and covered with silver paper, or cut from tin.

INDIAN. Suit made of tan canton flannel, fringed at edge of coat, sleeves, and trousers, with a band of fringe up and down arms and legs. He wears moccasins, beads, and a feather head-dress on his black wig. He carries bow and arrows, and a wooden tomahawk. A quiver can be made of a good-sized mailing-tube. He must have Indian make-up.

HUNTER's dress is more like the Indian's than like the colonist's, but he does not wear his hair long, and his suit should be trimmed with furs, not fringe. Fur cap with tail hanging down at back. He carries an old gun, not a bow.

Mistress Delight's children range from Roger, twelve years old, down to little Prudence, five. The Indian is a boy of Roger's age. The hunter, sixteen or seventeen.

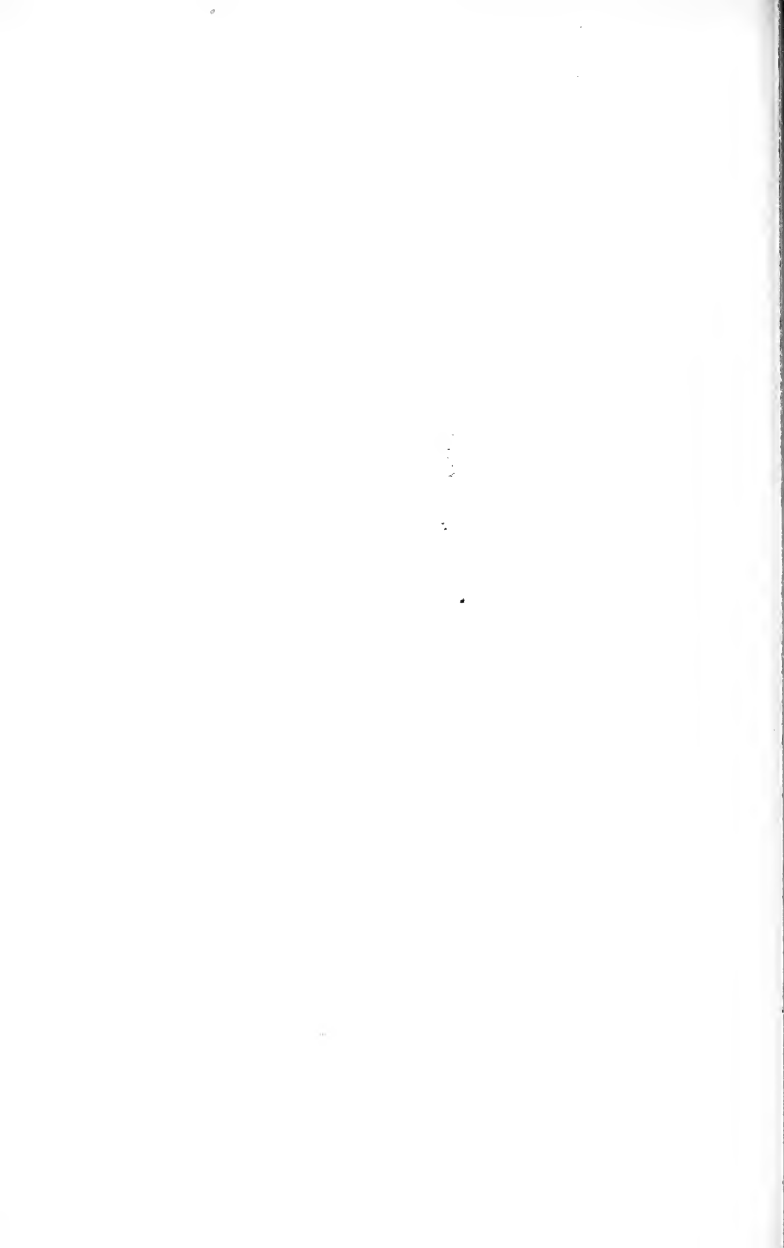
The little Christmas tree should be a very "home-made" one. Strings of popcorn and cranberries, spools and balls covered with bright paper, may be used for decorations, Indian baskets, and such toys as the little Puritans might have made, or any little quaint and old-fashioned trinkets to carry out this idea. Only white candles should be used, and these fastened on in the simplest and most unobtrusive manner.

The singing of the old psalm should be made as doleful and droning, even nasal, as possible. It can be sung to the Scotch tune of "Windsor," which is to be found in most hymn-books. The number of verses used may be determined by the amusement and applause of the audience. The boys who sing it must on no account allow themselves to laugh.

The charm and picturesqueness of the stage will be greatly enhanced if quaint old-time household articles can be borrowed or manufactured for properties—bellows, lantern, candlesticks, andirons, an old foot-stove—above all, a warming-pan, which the mother fills at the fire and carries out when she takes the younger children to bed. The dishes and platter so much admired by Patience should be rather conspicuously ugly.

Finally, a word in regard to the old-time English.

When the play was first given it was feared that the children would find it a stumbling-block, and that it would have to be dropped. Quite the reverse proved to be the case, however, and the children all gave their lines with delightful naturalness and evident enjoyment. This has been equally true of other groups of children by whom the play has since been given. They show no awkwardness in the use of the old forms, but seem to feel that it carries them out of the everyday, and makes danger and adventure real to them.



THE CHRISTMAS MONKS

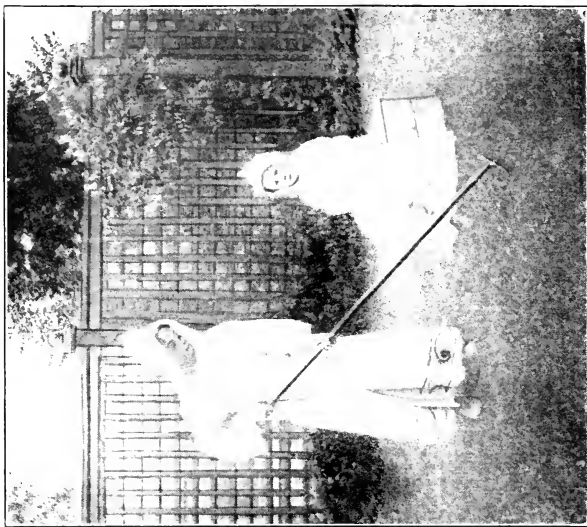
IN THREE ACTS

CHARACTERS

THE ABBOT	}	The Brethren of the Convent.
FATHER ANSELMUS		
FATHER GREGORY		
FATHER AMBROSE, the Leech		
FATHER SEBASTIAN		
FATHER FELIX		
FATHER HILARION, in charge of the comic toys	}	
THE PRINCE.		
COURTIER.		
COURT LADY.		
GEOFFREY, 1st Page.		
HUMPHREY, 2nd Page.		
PETER	}	Village children.
ROSALIA, Peter's Little Sister		
GILBERT, the Carpenter's Apprentice		
ROBIN, the Forester's son		
WALTER, the Miller's boy		
ANNETTA		
MARIANNA	}	Village mother and child.
MISTRESS SPINNING		
PEGGY SPINNING	}	From a distant village.
MISTRESS LONGLANE		
DOLLY LONGLANE		
PETER'S FATHER.		
PETER'S MOTHER.		



THE PRINCE



PETER AND THE PRINCE

THE CHRISTMAS MONKS

From a story by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.*

ACT I

TIME: *The 10th of April.*

SCENE: *Country road leading by the Convent. R., an angle of the Convent Wall. On it a large sign trimmed with evergreens, "Wanted, by the Christmas Monks, two good boys to assist in garden work. Applicants will be examined by FATHERS ANSELMUS and GREGORY, on April 8th, 9th, and 10th." Enter (R.) MISTRESS LONGLANE and DOLLY, wearily, as if at the end of a long journey. MISTRESS LONGLANE carries a large basket. DOLLY hangs back.*

MISTRESS LONGLANE [*rather crossly*]. Now, Dolly Longlane, what with your stopping to gather flowers by the roadside, or to watch the clouds, or to listen to the birds in the hedges, we'll never reach our journey's end. Make haste, now!

DOLLY [*tearfully*]. But, Mother, it's such a long, long way, and I'm so tired.

MISTRESS LONGLANE [*relenting*]. So you are, poor lamb. Well, a few moments can't make a very great difference, so sit ye down on the basket and take a rest. [*Puts basket down (L.), and seats DOLLY on it, wipes*

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her own face, straightens her bonnet, and then looks about her. Sees sign, at which she glances indifferently, then with interest, at last with amazement. Reads through, then takes out spectacles and reads again.]

MISTRESS LONGLANE. Now, what may be the meaning of *this*?

DOLLY. What is it, Mother?

MISTRESS LONGLANE [*reads sign to DOLLY*]. The Christmas Monks? What manner of men are the Christmas Monks? Here comes some good dame from the village. I'll make bold to ask.

[*Enter MISTRESS SPINNING, with little PEGGY (L.)*.]

MISTRESS LONGLANE [*courtesying*]. Good morrow, Mistress. Have you a moment to spare for a stranger in the country?

MISTRESS SPINNING [*courtesying*]. Yes, indeed, Mistress, and right gladly. Make your manners, Peggy.

[*PEGGY courtesies first to MISTRESS LONGLANE and then to DOLLY, who rises from the basket and courtesies, too.*]

MISTRESS LONGLANE. Why, Mistress, I am minded to ask the meaning of this strange sign that hangs upon the wall.

MISTRESS SPINNING. Oh, you must indeed be a stranger in the land if you have never heard of the Christmas Monks. If you have come to make your home in our village, you'll soon learn, I'll warrant me, that this is the home of the Christmas Monks who keep the gardens in which all the Christmas toys are grown.

MISTRESS LONGLANE. The Christmas toys!

DOLLY. Why, I thought Santa Claus brought them all.

MISTRESS SPINNING. So he does, my dear. He takes them to the children, of course, but this is the garden where he comes to load his sleigh.

MISTRESS LONGLANE. You don't say!

PEGGY [*shaking her finger*]. You never can see inside, but that garden is just full of toys. Oh, don't you wish we could peep in! [*Both children run in search of holes or cracks, stretch their arms towards the top, and stand on tiptoe, vainly, finally coming back to listen to the conversation of their mothers.*]

MISTRESS SPINNING. Yes, the Christmas Monks have a wonderful garden with beds for rocking-horses, beds for dolls, beds for drums, and picture-books and skates and balls. They do say so, that is; of course, I've never seen the inside. And the seeds are just the tiniest bits of dolls and drums and balls, and the rest of it. So little that you can hardly see them at all.

MISTRESS LONGLANE. What do the Monks do?

MISTRESS SPINNING. Why, they plant the seeds, and take care of the garden, and see that the toys are all ripe and ready for good old Santa Claus by Christmas time.

PEGGY. And that's not all, Mother. They have turkey and plum pudding *every* day in the year! [*Hugs herself.*]

DOLLY. Oh, my!

PEGGY. And it says "Merry Christmas" over the gate.

MISTRESS SPINNING. Yes, and every morning they file into the chapel and sing a Christmas carol, and every evening they ring a Christmas chime.

PEGGY. And they have wax candles in all the windows every night.

MISTRESS LONGLANE. Why, it's like Christmas every day in the year!

DOLLY. Aren't you glad we've come to live in this village, Mother? [*Clasps her hands.*]

MISTRESS LONGLANE. That I am, my dear. Why, it's enough to make one laugh just to hear of it.

MISTRESS SPINNING. That it is, Mistress. You're quite right. The Christmas Monks are so full of the Christmas spirit that it lasts them all the year round, and they just go about putting heart into them that get sad and discouraged. But I think I see some of the children coming for the examination.

MISTRESS LONGLANE. Ah! Yes. That's to take place this afternoon?

MISTRESS SPINNING. Yes, this is the last afternoon of it. The good Fathers have already held two examinations and, will you believe it? [*Coming closer and speaking very impressively.*] They haven't found two boys who are good enough yet, though they've examined *hundreds*.

[*Enter ANNETTA and MARIANNA, talking together.*]

ANNETTA. Oh, Marianna, don't you wonder whom the good Fathers will choose?

MARIANNA. Yes, indeed, I do, Annetta. Why, there aren't very many more boys to examine.

ANNETTA. No, nearly all the boys in the kingdom have tried.

MARIANNA. But they're all naughty in some way or other.

ANNETTA. Oh, don't you wish it was two *girls* the Fathers wanted?

MARIANNA. Oh, don't I! Ssh! Here comes Peter with his little sister Rosalia.

[*Enter PETER and ROSALIA.*

PETER. Here are some flowers I picked for you, sister.

ROSALIA. Thank you, Peter.

PETER. See, sister, that's the sign, and the Monks come right here to examine the boys.

ROSALIA. Oh, Peter, I wish they'd take you to work in the Christmas garden!

PETER. There isn't much chance of that, I'm afraid. But, come, sister, I'd better take you home. You might get hurt in the crowd. [*Exit (L.), PETER bowing politely as he passes the women.*]

ANNETTA. Marianna, why wouldn't Peter try?

MARIANNA. He's going to try to-day, I believe. He wouldn't before because he is so modest.

ANNETTA. But he's the very best boy in the village, and so good to his parents and his little lame sister!

[*Enter GILBERT, ROBIN, and WALTER; all stand, hands in pockets, before the sign, and read it in silence.*

GILBERT. I wish we had been examined yesterday. I hate not to know about it.

ROBIN. Well, perhaps we'll have a better chance to-day.

WALTER. Yes, there aren't so many of us to choose from.

GILBERT. I suppose the boys that get in there can have all the tops and balls they want.

ROBIN. Every day in the year.

WALTER. Why, all you'd have to do would be to pick them!

MISTRESS LONGLANE [*looking out L.*]. Why, what's this coming down the road?

MISTRESS SPINNING. Why, mercy on us, 'tis the Prince. He must be coming to try the examination.

CHILDREN [*in hushed voices, crowding to see, peeping over each other's shoulders*]. The Prince! The Prince! The Prince! [Enter COURTIER.

COURTIER [*with an impatient gesture*]. Ssh—ssh—ssh! Out of the way there! Make way for his Royal Highness!

[*Stands aside, bowing. Enter PRINCE, his cloak held by two pages, followed by the COURT LADY, by whom the COURTIER takes his place. Villagers fall back, courtesying and bowing. PRINCE stands with folded arms and haughty air reading sign and looking about him. Pause.*

PRINCE. Well, I see no Monks. Am I to be kept waiting here all day?

COURTIER [*bowing low*]. Your Highness, the hour set has not yet——

PRINCE [*interrupting angrily*]. I say I will not be kept waiting. What will my father the king say when he hears I have been kept standing in the highway with a rabble of common peasant children?

COURT LADY. Oh, your Highness, condescend to have a little patience!

PRINCE [*more angrily*]. I will not have patience. Patience is not a virtue for Kings and Princes. [*Taps his foot on the ground.*]

COURT LADY [*nervously looking up the road*]. Oh,

but think of something else—think of—think what a pleasant day it is!

PRINCE [*scowling prodigiously*]. Pleasant day, indeed!

COURTIER. Here they come, your Highness!

COURT LADY [*full of relief*]. Oh, yes! Here they come. Here they come!

[*Enter FATHERS ANSELMUS and GREGORY (R.), followed by SEBASTIAN and FELIX; at same time enter PETER (L.). Monks walk with hands clasped before them. Villagers all doff caps, bow, and courtesy. Even the PRINCE is awed into respect. The Fathers look about smilingly.*]

GREGORY. Well, well, Brother Anselmus, there seems quite a goodly number awaiting us to-day.

ANSELM [*rubbing his hands*]. Yes, Brother Gregory. I trust we shall discover the right boys at last. Let me see. [*Looks about, aside.*] I suppose we should examine his Royal Highness first?

GREGORY. Truly, my Brother. Let us commit no breach of etiquette.

ANSELM. Your Highness! [*Monks bow very slightly. PRINCE and attendants advance a little.*] How old are you?

COURTIER [*haughtily*]. His Royal Highness has just completed his eleventh year.

GREGORY. Indeed! And is he a good boy, as boys go?

COURT LADY. "As boys go," indeed! Why, his Royal Highness is not to be mentioned in the same day with common boys!

ANSELM. Oh! Then you are not like other boys?

COURTIER and COURT LADY [*bowing to PRINCE*]. A wonderful child, your worships!

GREGORY. Then he doesn't often do anything wrong?

COURTIER. Wrong? Oh, *never*, your worship!

COURT LADY. He never did a wrong thing in all his sweet life. [*Clasps hands and casts up her eyes.*]

ANSELM. Is he diligent? What about his lessons?

COURTIER. He doesn't *need* to study.

COURT LADY. A most brilliant intellect!

GREGORY. Well, well, well, Anselmus, I think we must try this paragon. [*They put their heads together.*]

GEOFFREY, 1ST PAGE. He just smashes his toys!

HUMPHREY, 2ND PAGE. And he beats his dogs!

COURTIER and COURT LADY. Horrors! [*They turn and each boxes the ear of the nearest page.*]

GEOFFREY. And when he's angry he kicks and screams!

HUMPHREY. And he won't mind even the King, his father!

[COURTIER and COURT LADY each clap a hand over a Page's mouth.]

COURTIER [*aside to LADY*]. Such disrespect!

COURT LADY [*aside to COURTIER*]. Such indiscretion!

ANSELM. Your Royal Highness is accepted. Now, Brother Gregory, we will continue the examination. First boy!

[*The PRINCE and his train fall back slightly.*]

GILBERT *steps forward.*

GREGORY. Your name?

GILBERT. Gilbert, the Carpenter's apprentice.

ANSELM. Are you a good boy?

GILBERT [*doubtfully*]. I guess so, sir.

GREGORY. Do you always speak the truth, Gilbert?

GILBERT [*stammering*]. W-w-w-well, nearly always.

ANSELM. Tut-tut-tut! That won't do at all. *Always* speak the truth, my boy. I am afraid we can't take you. Next.

[GILBERT *steps back, hanging his head*. ROBIN *comes forward*.

GREGORY. Name?

ROBIN [*in a small, frightened voice*]. Robin, the Forester's son.

ANSELM. Don't be afraid, Robin. So you are the Forester's son. Ah-h! Hum, hum-m-m! Are you kind to animals, Robin?

ROBIN. Oh, yes, sir. My father teaches me to be good to them always.

[GREGORY *bends over and whispers to* ANSELM.

ANSELM. Robin, answer me truthfully. Did you ever rob a bird's nest?

[ROBIN *hangs his head and works his toes about*.

ANSELM. Did you do this?

ROBIN [*rubbing his eyes*]. Yes, Father, I did.

GREGORY. Too bad, too bad. Now I *am* sorry to hear this.

ANSELM. So am I, Gregory, but you see it won't do!

[ROBIN *goes to stand by* GILBERT, *still rubbing his eyes*.

GREGORY. Next boy. [WALTER *steps forward*.] Name?

WALTER. I am Walter, the Miller's boy, and I help my father in the mill.

ANSELM. That is right, Walter; we approve of that.

GREGORY. You are diligent in the mill. How about lessons?

WALTER. Well—I go to school——

ANSELM. Are you at the head of your class?

WALTER. N-n-n-no, sir.

ANSELM. Second, then?

WALTER. N-n-no, sir.

GREGORY. Well, well, where are you, then? At the foot?

WALTER. Y-y-yes, sir.

ANSELM. Tut-tut! [*Shakes his head.*] What a pity! Are there any more boys, Gregory?

[*WALTER crooks his elbow over his eyes and stands by* ROBIN.

GREGORY. One boy, Brother Anselmus.

ANSELM. Ah! yes. I have seen this boy before, I think. Isn't this boy named Peter?

PETER. Yes, sir.

MISTRESS SPINNING [*coming suddenly forward and courtesying*]. And a better boy never lived, your reverence, if you'll excuse me for mentioning it.

ANSELMUS. Certainly, Dame, certainly. We shall be very glad to hear what you know about Peter.

MISTRESS SPINNING. It's just this I know, sir. He's a good, hard-working, honest boy, sir, and very obedient to his parents.

PEGGY. He takes good care of his little sister——

MARIANNA. And he never teases little girls——

ANNETTA. And he's at the head of his class in school——

GILBERT. And the teacher likes him——

ROBIN. So do all the boys——

WALTER. So does everybody in town!

GREGORY. Well, well, Brother Anselmus, it does seem as if we had found a good boy at last, doesn't it?

ANSELM. Yes, Brother Gregory, this is surely the right boy for us. And now that Peter and the Prince are accepted, let us return to our Convent and resume our exercises there. Come, boys.

[Children all clap loudly. Monks form a procession, PETER falls in behind, and the PRINCE gives his hand haughtily to be kissed by his attendants, then struts after. Exeunt, the Monks chanting.]

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *One week before Christmas.*

SCENE: *Inside the garden. At back, the wall. Against it (R.), the Doll bed. Left, small trees with toys. Down Center and across Front, garden paths. PRINCE and PETER in Monks' robes and sandals. PRINCE sitting idly on a wheelbarrow. PETER working with rake in the Doll bed. Tools, watering can, etc., scattered about.*

PRINCE [*crossly*]. Well, I don't see how you can *stand* this place, Peter. I've had more than enough—I'm just sick of it, I am.

PETER [*still working*]. I'm sorry, your Highness.

PRINCE. Yes, that's what you always say. I wish you would stop that everlasting work and come here and tell me why you're sorry? Why in the world do you keep on working and working? I believe you like it. Come here, I tell you!

[*PETER comes forward and leans on rake to talk with him.*]

PETER. Well, your Highness?

PRINCE. That's right, Peter. Now you just tell me what you like about it so awfully much.

PETER. Why, your Highness, you know I'm a poor boy and I've always had to work. This is such pretty work—it's just like play. And I never really had enough to eat until I came here to live. I tell you it's horrid to be hungry! Then the good Fathers are so kind, and I love the Christmas carols and the chimes—why, I think

it's a beautiful place, your Highness. Don't you like to watch the toys grow?

PRINCE. Oh, they grow so slow. I expected to have a bushelful of new toys every month, and not one have I had yet. And these stingy old Monks say that I can only have my usual Christmas share, anyway, and I mayn't pick them myself, either. I never saw such a stupid place to stay, in all my life. I want to have my velvet tunic on and go home to the palace and ride on my white pony with the silver tail, and hear them all tell me how charming I am. [*His words become nearly a wail, and he rubs his fists in his eyes.*]

PETER [*patting him sympathetically on the shoulder*]. Never mind, your Highness. It's pretty nearly Christmas now, and in a few days the toys will be ready to pick. Come along, and I'll help you to water those tin soldiers over there—you didn't get that done, did you?

PRINCE [*jumps up angrily and stamps his foot*]. No, and I won't do it, either. As for you, Peter, you're *tame*. If you had a grain of spirit you'd hate it just as much as I do. There! [*Runs off angrily (L.)*]. PETER *looks after him, shakes his head, gathers tools together neatly, takes up watering-can, and exit (R.)*. Enter PRINCE.]

PRINCE [*looking after PETER*]. There he goes now to water those horrid soldiers. I'd like to melt them all down to lumps of lead—I would! And Peter—he's enough to drive me crazy. I won't stay here a bit longer, so I won't. I'll get that ladder out of the tool house and get over the wall and go home. [*Starts off.*] But I'll take some Christmas presents with me, I know! [*Exit (L.)*]. Enter (R.) SEBASTIAN, FELIX, ANSELM, and GREGORY.]

ANSELM. Well, Brethren, we have every cause to

rejoice in the fine flourishing condition of our garden. Peter has kept the beds wonderfully clear of weeds.

GREGORY. Yes, and I think I may say that our garden has never been so fine as this year. It was a happy day for us when we found Peter.

FELIX. Indeed it was. How neatly he keeps the garden paths raked.

ANSELM. And what a good disposition the child has!

FELIX. Always ready and willing——

SEBASTIAN [*who has stood at one side with folded arms and dejected countenance*]. Peter. Peter. Peter. But what of the Prince?

ANSELM. Alas, yes. You are right, Brother Sebastian. What of the Prince?

GREGORY. Oh, I'm not utterly hopeless of the Prince, my Brethren.

SEBASTIAN. Brother Gregory is always over-hopeful.

FELIX. It is my solemn opinion, Brethren, that the Prince is the very worst boy in the Kingdom.

ANSELM. Oh, no, Brother Felix!

SEBASTIAN. I say he is! Think of the first day, when we gave him Noah's ark seed to sow, and he went into a passion because it wasn't gold-watch seed! [*The Monks nod regretfully.*] We set him a penance to kneel on dried pease in the chapel all afternoon. And hasn't it been so every other day in the year since?

ANSELM [*soothingly*]. Yes, Brother Sebastian, I fear it has. [*Cheerfully.*] But, then, you know, this has come hardest on you—hasn't it, my Brethren? For, you see, the Prince exhausted our list of penances so soon and you have had to remain in solitary confinement in your cell in order that you might invent new penances for him.

Hasn't it been too hard for poor Brother Sebastian, Brethren?

GREGORY. Yes, yes, poor fellow, he looks quite thin and worn.

FELIX. And to think how we were deceived in that boy! How his people praised him!

SEBASTIAN [*gloomily*]. I fear his Royal relatives are sadly deceived in him.

GREGORY. But let us think of pleasanter subjects, for I have hopes that the softening influences of the Christmas season will do great things for our misguided young friend. Let us give our minds to the contemplation of the Doll bed. How lovely the little creatures are!

FELIX. And how they will delight the hearts of the little girls.

ANSELM. Why, why, why, what is this? Here is a vacant place!

GREGORY. Oh, yes, Brother, that doll didn't come up. I noticed the place long ago.

FELIX. And so did I, but I neglected to speak of it.

GREGORY [*to ANSELM, who continues to shake his head over the missing doll*]. Come, come, Brother, let us be glad that such cases are rare. Now, my Brethren, we will go on with our inspection. [*They move towards exit, then, looking back, discover SEBASTIAN still in gloomy revery. FELIX goes back, puts an arm across his shoulder, and guides him gently after the others.*]

GREGORY. Poor fellow! Poor fellow! [*Exeunt slowly (R.). Enter (L.) ROSALIA.*]

ROSALIA [*looking about with delight*]. Oh, the lovely dollies. [*Examines them.*] And there comes Peter! [*Enter PETER (R.). ROSALIA goes to meet him.*] Peter! Peter!

PETER [*amazed*]. Oh, you darling! How in the world did you get in here?

ROSALIA. I just crept in behind one of the Monks. I saw him going along the street, and I ran after him, and when he opened the big gates I just crept in. Here I am, Peter!

PETER [*worried*]. Well, I don't see what I am going to do with you, now you *are* here. I can't let you out again, and I don't know whatever the Monks would say!

ROSALIA. Oh, I know! I'll stay out here in the garden. I'll sleep in one of those beautiful dolly-cradles over there, and you can bring me something to eat.

PETER. But the Monks come out very often to look over the garden, and they'll be sure to find you.

ROSALIA. No, I'll hide. Oh, Peter, see that place where there isn't any dolly?

PETER. Yes, that doll didn't come up.

ROSALIA. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll just stand here in her place and nobody can tell the difference. [*Steps into place among dolls.*]

PETER. Well, I suppose you can do that. [*Looks at her and shakes his head anxiously.*] Of course, I'm glad as glad can be to see you, but I'm afraid the Monks wouldn't like it. Now I must go and put away my tools. Be very quiet, sister. [*Exit PETER (L.), coming back to see if ROSALIA is safe. Waves his hand to her. Exit. A pause in which ROSALIA looks about her, feels the curls of the doll next her, etc., etc. Enter PRINCE (L.), carrying small ladder twined with green, and a huge basket of toys. Goes to wall, places ladder, tries its firmness, and begins to climb, finding much difficulty with basket. ROSALIA watches furtively with much interest and excitement.*]

PRINCE [*at top of wall*]. Now, if I can just get down on the other side. [*Works cautiously but ineffectually to get the basket over. Looks over wall joyfully.*] Oh, I see some of my father's people riding by! I'll get them to help. [*Waves hand frantically.*] My lord! My lord! Hither! [*Voices beyond wall: "The Prince!" "The Prince!" "His Royal Highness!" "Make haste, your Highness! have a care!" At which the PRINCE contrives to fall over the wall, dropping the basket inside.*]

PRINCE [*without*]. Oh, I'm not hurt! Let us get away! Hasten, my lords, hasten! [*Voices die away in the distance.*]

ROSALIA [*horrified*]. What a naughty boy! [*Enter PETER (L.).*] Oh, Peter, the Prince has run away.

PETER [*hurriedly examining ladder, etc.*]. Run away? [*Mounts ladder and looks over wall.*] He surely has! There he goes on the horse with that gentleman! [*Watching, thoughtfully.*] I was afraid he would try that! But this ladder [*getting down*] has always been kept locked up. Oh, too bad,—most of the toys are broken. [*Gathers them up and takes ladder.*] Keep very still, sister. I must put these away and tell the Abbot and the other Fathers what has happened. [*Exit (L.). Enter ANSELMUS (R.), walking up and down the path, hands behind him in deep thought. Takes turn near ROSALIA, notices her, starts, bends down to look closer, puts on spectacles, and gazes with astonishment.*]

ANSELM. Why, what is this! Hoc credam! I thought that wax doll didn't come up. Can my eyes deceive me? Non verum est! There is a doll here—and what a doll! On crutches and in poor homely gear! [*Puts out a hand to touch her.*]

ROSALIA [*starting*]. Oh! [ANSELM *starts so violently that his wreath falls off in the path.*]

ANSELM [*gasps, trying to recover himself*]. It is a miracle! The little girl is alive! Parva puella viva est. I must summon the Abbot and the Brethren at once. We will pick her and pay her the honors she is entitled to. [*Picks up wreath, settles it distractedly upon his head, and hurries to path (R.), where he motions to someone without.*]

ANSELM [*with excitement*]. Hilarion! Brother Hilarion! Hither! [*Enter HILARION in hot haste.*]

HILARION [*panting*]. Did you call, Brother Anselmus?

ANSELM. Summon the holy Father Abbot at once—say to him that it is a matter of importance. [*Exit HILARION, running. ANSELMUS returns to look at ROSALIA again, muttering.*] A matter of importance—a matter of importance. [*Enter ABBOT and all Monks.*]

ABBOT. At the wax doll bed, did you say, Hilarion? Ah, yes, there is my son Anselmus.

ANSELM [*coming forward*]. Most holy Abbot, behold a miracle. Vide miraculum! Thou wilt remember that there was one wax doll planted which did not come up. Behold! in its place I have found this doll on crutches, which is—alive.

MONKS. Alive! Strange! Wonderful!

ABBOT. Alive, did you say, Anselmus! Let me see her. [*ABBOT bends over to see ROSALIA. Monks crowd around to see.*]

ABBOT [*rising*]. Verum est! It is verily a miracle.

HILARION. Rather a lame miracle.

ABBOT [*reprovingly*]. My son, I fear the work in which you have been engaged, to wit, taking charge of

the funny picture-books and the monkeys and jumping jacks, has rather thrown your mind off its level of sobriety, and caused in you a tendency to make frivolous remarks, unbecoming a Monk.

AMBROSE. I am the leech of the Convent. Let me look at the miracle, most holy Abbot.

[*All make way for AMBROSE.*]

ABBOT. Gladly, my son Ambrose.

AMBROSE [*examining ROSALIA's ankle*]. I think I can cure this with my herbs and simples, if your reverence wills that I should try.

ABBOT [*doubtfully*]. But I don't know. I never heard of curing a miracle.

AMBROSE. If it is not lawful, my humble power will not suffice to cure it.

ABBOT. True. We will take her, then, and thou shalt exercise thy healing art upon her. [*Takes ROSALIA up in his arms, and leads the way, a Monk picking up the crutches.*] We will go on with our Christmas devotions, for which we should now feel all the more zeal.

[*Exit Monks (R.), singing. Enter PETER, darting to place where ROSALIA stood, then to look after the Monks, hands clasped in anxiety.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

TIME: *Christmas morning.*

SCENE: *The Convent chapel, decorated with Christmas greens, candles, etc. A picture of the Madonna and Child wreathed in green. On a dais (back Center), in the ABBOT'S chair, dressed in white with a wreath on her head, is seated little ROSALIA. She sings a simple little Christmas hymn. Enter PETER, with an air of secrecy, sitting down at ROSALIA'S feet.*

PETER. Oh, sister, I feel so miserable!

ROSALIA. Why, Peter? I think it is just beautiful!

PETER. Oh, yes, of course it is beautiful, and that's the very worst part of it. I mean, you know, that just because it is so beautiful, and the good Fathers are so very dreadfully kind, that I feel worse than ever. Oh, dear! I'm not saying what I mean a bit, sister, but, you see, I hate not to tell the Fathers the truth about you, and on Christmas day, too. You know they think that you are a live doll, and a miracle, and you're no such thing. You're just Peter's little sister, aren't you, pet? And they have been so kind, and Father Ambrose has made your poor little ankle so nice and well—— So it makes me feel horrid to think we're deceiving them. Why, it's 'most as bad as telling a story.

ROSALIA [*patting PETER'S shoulder*]. Poor Peter, I'm so sorry!

PETER. What shall we do about it, sister?

ROSALIA. Why, Peter, I'll tell them. They're all so kind, I don't think they will be cross.

PETER. Well, sister, I don't believe they will, either. And it's Christmas day, so I want to be sure to do what is right. And this is right—I am sure of that. Now I must run away; they'll be coming soon. [*Exit PETER. Sound of Monks singing in the distance grows louder and louder. Enter Monks, ABBOT leading, each bearing a tray full of toys for ROSALIA. Half the Monks march to the right, half to the left of her chair. Monks hold out their presents to her.*]

ROSALIA. Please, I'm not a miracle. I'm only Peter's little sister!

FELIX, AMBROSE, and SEBASTIAN. Peter!

ANSELM, HILARION, and GREGORY. Peter's little sister!

ABBOT. Peter? The Peter who works in our garden? [*Enter PETER, standing unnoticed by door.*]

ROSALIA. Yes, Peter's little sister.

[*Monks turn, each looking in the eyes of the one nearest.*]

GREGORY. Surely, here's an opportunity for a whole convent full of Monks to look foolish.

ANSELM. Filing up in procession——

AMBROSE. With our hands full of gifts——

SEBASTIAN. To offer them to a miracle——

FELIX. And then to find out that this miracle——

HILARION. This famous miracle is nothing but Peter's little sister! [*HILARION doubles up with laughter, but controls himself as the ABBOT lifts his hand for order.*]

ABBOT. My children, harken to me. Haven't I always maintained that there are two ways of looking at

anything? If an object is not what we wish it to be in one light, let us see if there is not some other light under which it will surely meet our views. This dear little girl is a little girl and not a doll, that is true. She did not come up in the place of the wax doll, and she is not a miracle in that light. But look at her in another light, and surely she is a miracle—do you not see? Look at her, the darling little girl, isn't the very meaning and sweetness of all Christmas in her loving, trusting, innocent little face?

MONKS. Yes, yes, she is a miracle, a miracle, indeed!

[Monks come forward and lay the toys at her feet. PETER fairly hugs himself with joy.]

ABBOT. And, Peter? Where is Peter?

PETER *[coming forward]*. Here I am, sir.

ABBOT. Peter, we feel so happy this beautiful Christmas Day, that we must find some expression for our joy—we must surely find a way to share such happiness with others. Run, my son, open the Convent gates, and bid all the village people who wait there for our usual gifts to enter and take part in our pleasure. *[Exit PETER in haste.]* Think, my children, what a gift we have here for the poor parents of Peter and little Rosalia—this dear little girl will be restored to them, not lame, as she was when she wandered here, but well and strong and happy like other little ones. Think of it, my children.

[Enter PETER, leading his father and mother, who hasten to ROSALIA, kneeling one on each side of her great chair. The rest of the villagers of Act I press in, and stand grouped at each side of the stage.]

ABBOT. Welcome, welcome, my good people! A Merry Christmas to you all!

VILLAGERS. Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!

[*Amid the tumult enter the two PAGES. They advance to the ABBOT, and bowing, present a letter with large seals.*]

ABBOT. How, now! What's this? [*Breaking seal and reading letter, the Monks showing deep interest.*] My children, we have here a message from His Majesty, the King. He tells us that his son, the Prince, reached his palace in safety, and that he has come to feel great regret for all the trouble and anxiety he caused the Christmas Monks. He hopes that the Prince's repentance, though late, will help to season our Christmas and make it a happy one. And his Majesty adds that he finds great improvement in his son. Well! Well! this does indeed add yet another happiness to our day. [*To the people.*] And I know you all, little and big, are just as happy as we are, for at last the gates are open to the Convent of the Christmas Monks.

[*All sing a Christmas carol.*]

CURTAIN

NOTES ON COSTUME AND PRESENTATION

(Mrs. Freeman's story of the same name, from which this little play was taken, has delightful illustrations which would be of help in making the monks' costumes. It appeared first in *Wide Awake*, Volume 16, and was later published in a collection of Mrs. Freeman's short stories, entitled "The Pot of Gold.")

THE ABBOT (taken by an adult), and

THE BRETHREN of the Convent (boys, sixteen to eighteen) wear long hooded robes made of white canton flannel. Greek patterns in green are stenciled at hem of skirt and around the wide sleeves. A rope of ground pine, or other Christmas wreathing, is worn for a girdle, ends hanging, and the tonsures are made by wearing close-fitting skull-caps of flesh-colored silk or sateen, with a wreath of green at the edge.

When PETER *and the* PRINCE come to the Garden their dress is the same, but their Greek borders should be smaller and they wear no tonsures. They are boys of ten. Hoods of all are worn hanging, except that of Brother SEBASTIAN, who in the 2nd Act goes gloomily hooded. All wear sandals and white stockings.

As the story suggests neither country nor period, there may be a good deal of latitude in the matter of costumes for the rest of the cast, but the court party in the first act should be as resplendent as possible.

THE PRINCE. Plumed hat, short trousers, slippers

with bows, coat with broad lace collar and cuffs. Very long cloak, borne behind him by the

PAGES. Dressed alike in a style somewhat resembling the Prince.

COURTIER. The same, with the addition of a short cape, and a sword.

COURT LADY. Dress made with a train and a high beaded collar. The boy and girl playing these parts are also Peter's Father and Mother in the last act.

MISTRESS LONGLANE and MISTRESS SPINNING, and the little Village girls wear large poke bonnets, old-fashioned shawls or white kerchiefs, and mitts.

PETER. Neat, but old and faded blouse and knickerbockers. Cap.

LITTLE ROSALIA. Quaint smocked dress, of soft blue, a Persian border at hem, square neck, and short sleeves. (Or, white, with blue borders.) Small cap, trimmed in the same way. She is lame and walks with crutches.

PETER'S FATHER and MOTHER. Poorly and roughly dressed.

GILBERT, the Carpenter's Apprentice. Blue denim apron. Carries T-square.

ROBIN, the Forester's Son. Sleeveless green coat, over a white shirt with full sleeves; full trousers; broad felt hat, turned up on one side with a quill.

WALTER, the Miller's Son. White apron. Dusty felt hat.

(If preferred, instead of using the above suggestions for costumes, the Randolph Caldecott pictures, or Kate Greenaway illustrations of "Mother Goose," may be adopted as a scheme for dressing all but the Monks.)

The entrance and exit of the Monks is always heralded by their singing. Their song may be one of the well-known Christmas carols containing a few Latin words, but a Latin chant is most effective, such as can be found in the little Sunday-school hymnals of the Roman Catholic Church. Suggestions for ROSALIA's song and the carol at the end of the play will be found on p. 315.

SETTING

For the Garden wall, a frame must be made sufficiently strong to bear the weight of the Prince, and may need special bracing at the central point where he climbs over. He uses a small ladder, preferably a red-painted one, like those in children's ladder-wagon sets. The framework of the wall may be covered with paper, but unbleached muslin is much more substantial and lasting. On this is painted the wall, representing either brick or stone, with a stone coping, all quaintly stained and moss-grown. It is five or six feet in height.

The beds where the toys grow are outlined in green. Dolls as large as possible should be used in the back row, in order to prevent the contrast with little Rosalia from being too great. Smaller dolls may be used in the front rows. The number depends on the size of the stage and the possibilities for borrowing. They may be made to stand with wooden braces, but it will be found convenient if milliners' stands for displaying hats can be obtained, as they are light and can be easily set in place. For the other bed, two or three small bare bushes, on the branches of which can be fastened such toys as whips, tin trumpets, etc. Small wheelbarrow, watering-pot, and other garden tools scattered about.

For the last scene, the walls should be plain and dark in color. The Abbot's chair is large and ecclesiastical, and Rosalia looks, in it, like the doll for which the Monks mistook her. Two great candles, in tall candlesticks, on the daïs beside her, are effective. No other furniture.



THE SPELL OF CHRISTMAS

A CHRISTMAS PLAY, IN TWO SCENES

CHARACTERS

SIR GILBERT UNDERHILL.

LADY KATHERINE UNDERHILL.

RUFUS }
RAFE } Their Children.
CICELY }
ALLISON }

PHYLLIS, their orphan niece.

GILLIAN }
DICCON } Servants.

STEPHEN }
ANDREW } Roundhead soldiers.
WAT }

SIR PHILIP }
LADY GERALDINE } Ancestors of the House of Underhill.

WAITS, who sing without.

TIME: In the reign of Charles the First.

SCENE: The old manor-house of the Underhills.



ALLISON

"Of a truth, I did hear their voices"

THE SPELL OF CHRISTMAS

SCENE I

A chamber or corridor in the Manor House. Door [L.]. Hangings on wall. GILLIAN seated [R.], with the three children about her, all working at wreaths and garlands, and singing an old carol. Curtain rises on second verse. While they sing, DICCON enters. Takes up sword or other piece of armor from table [L.] and begins to polish it.

CICELY [*with a deep sigh*]. Good Gillian, methinks that though we sang our carols o'er and o'er we could not make it seem like Christmas-tide. Brother Rufus is gone away, and we may not even say we miss him. I would I knew—— [*Chin on hand.*]

GILLIAN. You would you knew what, little mistress mine?

CICELY. I would I knew what is wrong with us. Christmas was ever such a merry season in this dear house.

RAFE [*wisely*]. 'Tis because my father goeth about wearing such a stern face.

ALLISON. And Mother looketh so sad.

CICELY [*confidentially*]. And I think cousin Phyllis cries in her chamber sometimes.

DICCON [*mutters*]. Meseemeth we should all know right well what aileth this place. [*Enter SIR GILBERT.*

Stands in doorway.] When he that was the very life and soul is missing from the hearth——

GILLIAN. Hist, Diccon [*warning gesture*].

DICCON. ——and more than that, under a cloud——

GILLIAN. Be silent, I say, Diccon.

DICCON [*paying no heed*]. 'Tis young Master Rufus this house needs so sorely, I'm thinking.

SIR GILBERT [*striding forward angrily*]. Silence, I say. Have I not given command that my son's name shall not pass the lips of any of my people? I will be obeyed in mine own house. Diccon, hence! Thou canst spend thy days in the stables caring for my horses, an thou'lt not learn to bridle thy tongue. Mayhap the dumb beasts will teach thee a lesson.

DICCON [*bowing humbly*]. I crave pardon, Sir Gilbert. I but thought——

SIR G. Enough. [*Turns to table. Exit DICCON, with an awkward bow.*] Gillian, let this be a warning to you as well. I have laid my commands—I will be obeyed. [*Exit.*]

RAFE. 'Tis very hard to be just children, when anything's wrong, I think. We may not know what our elders do know, and yet we must be just as uncomfortable.

GILLIAN. Tst-tst, my lambs! Let us think of other things. Shall we measure our garlands? [*Stretches out her green.*]

RAFE [*measuring his against it, while CICELY and ALLISON stretch theirs together*]. Indeed, 'tis soon done, good Gillian. We've used up all our greens.

GILLIAN [*rising*]. I will see if Roger and Noll have brought more for us. [*Exit.*]

RAFE [*considering his garland*]. Would my garland

measure around the great pasty Dame Joan hath made for to-morrow's feast, think you, Cicely?

CICELY [*laughing*]. The venison pasty, Rafe? Mayhap when Dame Joan hath turned her back, we can try and see.

ALLISON. I fear mine will but reach around a very little pudding! [*Enter PHYLLIS.*] Oh, cousin Phyllis, cousin Phyllis, come see our garlands!

PHYLLIS [*coming forward*]. Did my little Allison wreath all this long piece? [*ALLISON nods proudly.*] That's brave work, indeed.

CICELY [*arms around PHYLLIS*]. Dear cousin Phyllis, won't you stay and help us—and tell us why everyone is so sad?

PHYLLIS [*frightened*]. Nay, dear, I must not, and you must not be sad—'tis Christmas Eve.

RAFE. Yes, we know. But *why* doth my father look so stern——

PHYLLIS. Nay, nay—I may not speak of it. My aunt will be sore displeased. [*Enter LADY KATHERINE.*]

LADY KATHERINE [*in doorway*]. Phyllis, why art idling here with the children? To thy tasks, girl!

[*Exit.*]

PHYLLIS [*turning hastily to follow*]. You see, sweethearts, I must not tarry. But I wish good speed to your garlands. Farewell. [*Exit.*]

CICELY. Thou dost see, Rafe. Father will not let us speak of brother Rufus, and Mother is so cross to poor cousin Phyllis.

ALLISON [*shocked*]. Nay, Cicely; Mother isn't cross. It's naughty to say that.

RAFE. I think I know what it is all about. [*Very confidentially. Girls draw their chairs close.*] I think

brother Rufus ran away to the wars to fight for the King——

CICELY. But, Rafe, that can't be what displeaseth Father, for Father is a soldier, too, and he himself will fight for our lord the King, if so be the King needeth him.

ALLISON [*nodding her head with conviction*]. Father is the most gallantest soldier in all the country.

RAFE. But I do think that is why Father is so angry with brother Rufus.

CICELY. And why is Mother so—so unkind to poor cousin Phyllis?

RAFE [*very solemnly*]. Because—because Rufus did say that when he was come of age and was a man he would marry cousin Phyllis!

CICELY. Oh! But *I* think that's very, *very* nice! Why doesn't Mother like it, Rafe? They'd never go away to any other house at all—and then, beside,—Allison and I could be their bride-maidens!

[*Enter GILLIAN with an armful of greens.*

GILLIAN [*sitting down among them*]. Here's work for us all, my pets. We must e'en make our fingers fly an we would finish our task.

CICELY [*full of importance*]. Oh, good Gillian, Rafe doth say——

RAFE [*trying to repress her*]. It's no use to ask Gillian, Cicely. Didst not hear my Father tell her she mustn't talk of it?

GILLIAN. That's best, Master Rafe. Let Gillian tell you a tale whilst we work.

ALLISON. A fairy-tale, Gillian? [*Whispers full of awe.*] Are the *fairies* about to-night, dear Gillian?

RAFE. Not on Christmas Eve, Allison. They aren't,

are they, Gillian? Midsummer Eve is the fairies' night.

CICELY. And fairies have no power on Christmas Eve, and witches can't charm you, nor cast their spells upon you——

RAFE. Because 'tis such a holy, holy night.

GILLIAN. Oh, but there be wonderful things that do befall on Christmas Eve, Master Rafe. My old grandam used to say that when the midnight bells ring, the cattle in the stables do kneel down to hail the holy day!

CICELY. Oh, Gillian, *do* they?

RAFE. Hast ever seen them, Gillian? Or hath thy grandam?

ALLISON. All the cows, and the sheep, and the little, little lambs?

GILLIAN. Nay, sweetheart, I never saw them, but I was wont to think, each Christmas Eve, that I would surely creep out to the stables and keep watch.

RAFE. And did you?

GILLIAN. Oh, Master Rafe, in truth 'twas a pretty plan,—but I was not a very brave little wench,—and it was so cold and dark and fearsome: when the time was come, I was always fain to put it off until the next year!

RAFE [*scornfully*]. Sooth! I would never do that!

GILLIAN. Nay, that I'll warrant, Master Rafe! But let me tell thee what else my grandam hath told me. 'Twas about the portraits in the long gallery in this very house.

[*Enter DICCON, with armful of wood for fire, which he piles upon the hearth.*]

CICELY. The portraits—— Oh, yes, Gillian. [*Draws close to GILLIAN.*]

RAFE. I know. Our great-great-grandfather and our great-great-grandmother.

CICELY. Bethink thee, Rafe—what are their names? I do forget.

RAFE. They are Sir Philip and Lady Geraldine Underhill. And they lived right here in this very house.

DICCON [*turning from hearth*]. Yes, Master Rafe, they lived in this house. He was a passing gallant gentleman, and fought for the King, and she was as beautiful as he was brave, and as brave as she was beautiful. And they say that in a great war his enemies came to search this house for him, but he and my lady hid themselves in a secret chamber that's long since forgot. But 'tis somewhere in the house,—[*looks about as if expecting to find door at once*] if a body just but knew how to find the door——

GILLIAN [*in contempt*]. Nay, nay, Diccon. I'll warrant me the Master knoweth where that door is.

DICCON. Mayhap Sir Gilbert doth know. But none else may find it. Many's the time the lads ha' looked for it—many's the time. **[Exit.]*

[*RAFE goes about for a moment, lifting hangings, etc., as if in search for door, but returns to GILLIAN'S side to hear her answer to CICELY.*

CICELY. But, Gillian, what was it thy grandam told about the portraits?

GILLIAN. Oh, verily, my sweet. Thinking about the secret door I had well-nigh forgot. My grandam said that if all the house was still and sleeping, just on the stroke of twelve every Christmas Eve, Sir Philip and my Lady Geraldine do move and breathe, step forth from

their picture frames, clasp hands, and move together in an ancient dance!

RAFE. *Do they?*

CICELY and ALLISON. Oh-h-h! [*Drawing near to Gillian with a little delighted shiver.*]

LADY K. [*without*]. Gillian, Gillian! Come hither, wench; I need thee.

GILLIAN [*rising*]. Anon, my lady! [*To children.*] Think of it, bairns—that fine brave gentleman and that beautiful lady, stepping across the floors in the moonlight—— [*Exit, hand lifted as if holding a partner's, taking stately dancing steps.*]

CICELY. Oh, Rafe, think'st that Gillian speaketh true?

RAFE. Yes, I do believe her. Christmas is such a marvelous fair time, Cicely, that I do think *anything* wonderful might happen.

ALLISON. I would I could *see* Sir Philip and Lady Geraldine at their dancing.

CICELY. Oh, so do I! Rafe, dost think—— [*Hesitates, afraid to speak her thought.*]

RAFE [*boldly*]. I think—that if my lord and my lady do dance—we shall see them this very Christmas Eve.

CICELY. Oh, Rafe, what dost mean us to do?

RAFE. When the great doors are closed at eleven o'clock—I always hear Diccon making them fast—I'll sit up in my bed, so that I can't by mischance fall asleep. Then I will wake thee and Allison, and we will steal into the long gallery and hide ourselves.

CICELY. But if Sir Philip and Lady Geraldine see us, mayhap they'll be displeased and not come forth.

RAFE. But if we go soon enough they can't see us, because they don't come alive until twelve o'clock. Until the clock strikes, they're only pictures, Cicely.

CICELY. Verily, I did forget.

RAFE. I mean to make sure the nursery door which giveth on the back passage is left unlocked and open, or mayhap I might fail to hear. Come, sister, bring your wreaths. [*Goes toward door.*]

CICELY [*gathering up wreaths*]. Oh, Rafe, 'tis a wonderful fine plan!

ALLISON. Thou'lt let me come too, Rafe?

RAFE. We'll all go. S-sh-sh, now, not a whisper to anyone. [*Exeunt children in great excitement. Short pause. Enter RUFUS, secretly (L.), stopping to look about and listen. Crosses furtively to door (R.) and looks out. Enter PHYLLIS (L.), and as RUFUS turns back into room, she sees him, and with a low cry hurries to meet him.*]

PHYLLIS. Oh, Rufus, Rufus—not you!

RUFUS. Yes, 'tis I, fair cousin. I prithee speak softly. I would not have it known as yet that I am here.

PHYLLIS. But whence came you, Rufus? We thought you miles away, with the King's troops——

RUFUS. My company made a secret march, across this valley, and I thought to spend Christmas in mine own dear home. My Captain gave me leave to come here to-night, and join him to-morrow eve. But after I set out on my solitary march, a company of Round-head rebels sprang up from a copse by the way and gave chase to our men.

PHYLLIS. How knew you this?

RUFUS. I had come but a half-hour's walk, up the long hill, and saw it all quite plainly.

PHYLLIS [*much troubled*]. But, Rufus, then you are cut off from the King's men, for there be very many rebels and few loyal hearts about us, in these parts.

RUFUS. I know, Phyllis. And, furthermore, though I would not alarm thee, I must tell thee that I was seen by that treacherous Farmer Gosling on the road hither, and I fear he may set others like himself upon my track.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Rufus, you frighten me so—they will surely come and take you.

RUFUS. Aye, they will try, dear cousin. But I've safe harbor in my father's house, and when darkness comes I can put forth once more and rejoin our men in the North.

PHYLLIS. A safe harbor, saidst thou! Thou little knowest—— Hark! someone comes. Hide thee speedily, Rufus. Here, behind this curtain. There—do not show thyself until I see thee again. [*Hides RUFUS behind hanging, and exit (R.). Enter SIR GILBERT and LADY KATHERINE (L.). SIR GILBERT sits moodily in chair by fire. LADY KATHERINE stands before him.*]

SIR G. [*as they enter*]. I tell thee, I will hear no more of it.

LADY K. But, my lord, this day have I heard a rumor that a band of King's men were near us—here in this nest of rebel enemies! If there were fighting—if my boy Rufus were in danger, and I might not succor him, 'twould go nigh to kill me. And so, my lord, I'm come once more to crave pardon for him.

SIR G. I tell thee, it will not be granted thee. When the boy disobeyed me and ran away I disowned him. I vowed he should never enter these doors again.

LADY K. My lord, the lad was so eager to serve his King.

SIR G. [*springs up and paces the floor*]. Did I forbid him to serve his King? Nay, when the time was come,

he should have gone with me, with horse and arms, in state befitting a gentleman's son. And so I told him. I told him he was full young yet—the lad is scarce turned seventeen. Eagerness to serve his King, forsooth! 'Twas mere idleness. He chose to run away from his tasks and his studies. Beshrew me! Whether he find the camp life of a common soldier a bed of roses or no, I care not. He must e'en lie in it. I'll neither grant him pardon, nor receive him in my house. To consort with common soldiers and camp ruffians—he hath disgraced my name.

LADY K. Oh, my poor lad.

SIR G. Thou and Phyllis need not grieve so foolishly——

LADY K. [*stiffens angrily*]. Phyllis! She is the one reason why I am reconciled to his being away.

SIR G. [*more gently*]. Come, good wife, be not so hard upon poor Phyllis. She's a good maid and a fair. What if the lad have turned her head a bit? I would fain have thee remember the lass is an orphan and we her only kinsfolk.

LADY K. [*moving away*]. I care not to talk of Phyllis. [*Turns back.*] Will nothing move you, my lord?

SIR G. [*hardening*]. I've told you my mind—let's hear no more of this. [*Exeunt (L.). RUFUS comes from hiding-place and stands sadly by fire. Enter PHYLLIS.*]

RUFUS [*turning toward her*]. Why, Phyllis, I little guessed my father could be so hard and stern. I knew I had displeased him, but *this* passeth belief.

PHYLLIS. He is very unforgiving. When you called this house a safe harbor, you little knew.

RUFUS [*turning as if to go*]. So be it, then. If my

father cannot forgive me,—I'll e'en forth to the tender mercies of mine enemies.

PHYLLIS [*alarmed*]. Oh, no, no, Rufus! At least do not venture forth until the dark hath come! No one must see you here. Come into the blue guest chamber. 'Tis not a secure hiding-place should the house be searched, but 'twill serve for the time, and by midnight you may steal away safely. Do come, Rufus! [*He lets her half lead, half push him out as she talks. Exeunt (R.). Pause—— Children's laughter heard. Enter (L.) CICELY with a bunch of raisins. RAFE in pursuit. They run all about the stage. CICELY jumps upon a chair and holds the raisins over RAFE'S head. He tries to jump for them.*]

CICELY [*breaking off raisins and dropping them one at a time into RAFE'S mouth*]. Oh, Rafe, such rare sport! You'll have no need to waken *me*. I'll never sleep this night, I know.

ALLISON [*without, calling*]. Rafe, Rafe! Where art thou? Oh, Cicely!

RAFE* [*pulling CICELY down and securing raisins*]. Quick, sister, let's hide us! [*RAFE runs behind hangings (R.), CICELY behind table (L.). Enter ALLISON (L.). Stands still and looks about.*]

ALLISON [*softly*]. Of a truth, I did hear their voices. . . . I know. . . . 'Tis sport. 'Tis a game of hide and hunt. I must set me to find 'em. [*Goes peering about. As she peeps over chair (R.), CICELY runs out and covers ALLISON'S eyes from behind with her hands. RAFE comes from other side and feeds ALLISON with raisins. RAFE and CICELY begin to sing Christmas carol, and ALLISON throws off CICELY'S hands and joins in song.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A gallery in the Manor House. R. front, fireplace with glowing red fire. Beside it, at right angles, settle. R. back, door. Back Center, the portraits of SIR PHILIP and LADY GERALDINE, in tall old frames reaching down nearly to floor, so that only a short step is necessary when the figures come out. L. back, window, with snow-covered trees in distance, and moonlight. L. front, door. Hangings, a few quaint chairs, etc. Center of stage clear. Curtain shows empty stage. DICCON and GILLIAN cross from L. to R., talking—GILLIAN enters first, as if in haste, DICCON trying to stop her. Stage lights very dim. GILLIAN carries a candle, which she shades with her hand.*

DICCON [*calling softly*]. Gillian, Gillian! Hang the wench! Wilt not wait, good Gillian? I've somewhat of great import to tell thee.

GILLIAN [*impatiently*]. Were I to believe thee, Master Diccon, *all* thine affairs are of great matter. Mayhap thou thinkest *my* business is ever of small consequence?

DICCON. Nay, then, Gillian—but this news is thine and mine and my lord's and my lady's too!

[GILLIAN *turns, a little curious, and waits for him.*

* See note on Fireplace, p. 313.

GILLIAN [*scornfully*]. A strange matter, methinks, that can be thine and mine and theirs, too!

DICCON. But list a moment, and you shall hear. Giles, the horse-boy, hath been in the village this day, and heard that which bodes ill to us. Giles heard them talking in the tavern——

GILLIAN. Heard whom talking, Diccon? I can make naught of thy twisting tales!

DICCON. Why, the Roundhead knaves, be sure. And the pith and kernel of Giles' tale—an thou'lt not hear the how and the when—is this! that they mean to come hither this night and search our house.

GILLIAN [*gives a little scream and claps her hand over her mouth*]. Oh, Diccon, Diccon,—what can they want here? We be peaceful folk. In sooth 'tis known we are all good King's men, but no harm have we done to any! Oh, Diccon!

DICCON. Sst! silly wench! They'll not harm thee. But hark to what else Giles heard. They be coming to search for Master Rufus!

GILLIAN. Master Rufus! But he hath not been here these many weeks.

DICCON. Sst! Speak more cautiously, Gillian. The knaves did say they have certain knowledge that Master Rufus is here in hiding.

GILLIAN [*looking fearfully and suspiciously about*]. Oh, Diccon, dost believe it?

DICCON. In good sooth, how can I tell? But I am in great fear.

GILLIAN. Thou afeard, Diccon? Oh, what dost think the Roundhead villains will do to us?

DICCON [*angrily*]. A pest upon thee, wench! They'll do naught to *us*! 'Tis for my young master I

am troubled. If they take him, 'tis doubtless to a rebel prison he'll go, and then—it's rough fare for such a young lad,—and gentle born and bred to boot.

GILLIAN [*curiously*]. But can he be here, think you, Diccon?

DICCON [*anxiously*]. He may be. And I do fear to ask my lord or my lady of the matter. [*Going towards door.*] I would I knew my duty, Gillian.

[*Exeunt (R.). After a moment enter (L.) the three children in nightgowns, the little girls in caps, also. They do not speak, but motion to each other excitedly, and run about, choosing a fit hiding-place. ALLISON takes a small stool and plants it directly in front of portraits, sits down, and folds her hands to wait. The others, consulting by signs, do not at first see her, then rush upon her in alarm and drag her away, taking stool with them, and making reproving gestures. All go to settle, place stool by fire, and allow ALLISON to sit on it. CICELY kneels at end of settle, partly concealed by its arm. RAFE lies full length upon it, alternately ducking below arm and peeping over it. They shake fingers at each other, touch lips to insure silence, and when ALLISON turns as if to speak, CICELY claps a quiet hand over her mouth. Business of settling into place. When there has been a moment's pause, a bell is heard in the distance striking midnight. The portraits slowly turn their heads, take a long and deep breath, and*

begin to move; soft music is heard (minuet, from Mozart's "Don Giovanni"); they bend forward, step with one foot from the frames and clasp hands across the space between; then step forth entirely, and bow and courtesy low and slowly to each other. Then they take hands, and to the music go through such part of the old French minuet as is practicable for two alone. When this has continued as long as is desirable, there is a sudden noise without. Instantly the music ceases and the figures go back with all swiftness and resume pose in frames. Children also much startled.

CICELY [*in alarmed whisper*]. Oh, Rafe, what was that?

RAFE. I don't know. Sh-sh-sh!

[*Enter RUFUS (R.), silently and furtively. Goes to window and peers out. Comes back hurriedly and without seeing children. Exit (R.). RAFE springs up and follows to door, gazing out after RUFUS.*

CICELY [*aloud, but still cautious, though in great fright*]. Oh, Rafe—I saw a man! Who was that?

ALLISON. So did I, sister! Let's run!

CICELY. Mother! Mother! I'm frightened!

ALLISON. Oh, Gillian, come get us!

[*Both rush screaming out of door (L.). RAFE comes quickly and silently back. Goes to window and stands peering out.*

RAFE. That was brother Rufus. I wonder how he came hither. . . . And there is someone . . . away out

there in the snow . . . men . . . coming this way. [*Leaves window and stands directly in front of portraits, with his back to them, and a little way off. Stares anxiously straight before him, and speaks low and quietly.*] Perhaps they are soldiers . . . or wicked people come to seek for him and take him away. . . . Rufus went up the little stairs to the Tower. . . . There's no place to hide in the Tower! [*His voice gradually rising.*] They'll find him as soon as they get here. . . . Oh, *what* shall I do—what shall I do? [*Stands with hands clenched, listening and thinking, wide-eyed. The portraits move and bend toward him.*]

LADY GERALDINE [*leaning forward and smiling tenderly*]. Little Rafe, little Rafe, thou must play the man this night!

SIR PHILIP [*leaning forward and speaking earnestly*]. Little lad, little lad, thou art little and young! Go and fetch thy father!

RAFE [*does not turn at all*]. My father will know what to do. . . . Mayhap he will even open the secret door Gillian telleth of. . . . Surely, surely he cannot be angry now. [*Turns and rushes wildly out (R.)*].

[*Enter PHYLLIS (R.), all shaking and trembling.*]

PHYLLIS [*calls softly*]. Rufus! Rufus! Where art thou? [*To herself.*] Oh, where can the rash boy have gone? He was safe for the time in the Blue Chamber. And now—— Oh, what can I do! I must warn him! [*Wrings her hands and goes to window.*] GILLIAN hath told me they are coming to seek him. He must be warned! Oh, where can he have gone? [*Goes to door (L.), then to window once more. Enter RAFE, dragging SIR GILBERT by the hand.*]

RAFE [*breathless*]. You needs must listen, Father! Brother Rufus came in at this door and went to the window, softly, to peep out. Then he ran out again and I got me up speedily and ran to the casement. [*Tries to draw SIR GILBERT to window, but he resists and stands frowning (R. Center).*] And I looked out, Father, and there was someone coming—men—away over toward the village. I saw them. And Rufus is gone up the Tower stairs—— [*PHYLLIS starts forward to door, but turns back.*]

PHYLLIS. The Tower, saidst thou, Rafe?

RAFE. Yes! The Tower! And thou knowest, Father, there is no way of escape from the Tower! Father, tell us what to do!

PHYLLIS [*coming to his side with clasped hands*]. Oh, good Uncle, save him while there is yet time!

RAFE. I know *thou* canst find a way, Father!

[*Enter LADY KATHERINE, the two little girls clinging to her skirts.*]

LADY K. [*in amazement*]. What can be the meaning of all this coil? The children crying to me in fright some old wives' tale about the family portraits—someone in the gallery—the soldiers—— My poor wits cannot fathom it!

RAFE [*still clinging to his father's hand*]. Oh, lady Mother, Rufus is hiding in the Tower, and the soldiers are coming, and Father must save him!

LADY K. [*cries out*]. Rufus, saidst thou? [*Shakes off the children and hurries toward RAFE.*] Where is he, boy?

RAFE [*seizes her hand and draws her to door (L.)*]. Here, Mother, here, up in the Tower. [*Exeunt. CICELY and ALLISON cling together.*]

CICELY. Oh, Allison, sweet sister, it was brother Rufus we did see in the gallery. And the Roundhead soldiers are coming.

ALLISON. Will they drag him away from here?

PHYLLIS. Oh, Uncle, dear Uncle, surely thou knowest some secret place in this old house where he can lie safe until danger be past?

[*Enter RAFE and LADY KATHERINE with RUFUS (R.). LADY KATHERINE hastens to window, glances out, then goes to quiet children, who are sobbing. RAFE rushes to his father, and RUFUS at first starts to him.*

RAFE. Father, here he is. Now what's to do?

RUFUS. Father, I would——

SIR G. [*interrupting*]. Not a word from you, sirrah! How dare you enter this house whence you went but to disgrace my name? You are no son of mine!

[*RUFUS draws back and stands proudly a little aloof. The rest cry out in protest.*

LADY K. Oh, my lord, you cannot mean the words you speak!

PHYLLIS. Uncle!

RAFE. Oh, Father, poor Rufus!

DICCON [*without*]. Sir Gilbert! Sir Gilbert! Where art thou, master!

GILLIAN [*without*]. Oh, mistress! Oh, my lady!

[*Enter DICCON and GILLIAN in greatest excitement. DICCON carries a pair of candles, which he places hastily on the chimney-piece. Raise lights.*

DICCON. My lord, the soldiers are coming! [*Rushes to window.*] They be at our very gates!

GILLIAN. Oh, mistress, the murdering knaves will burn the house above our heads!

LADY K. Hold thy peace, silly wench!

[*General hubbub. Children cling crying to their mother. DICCON and GILLIAN at window. RAFE now running to window, now tugging at his father's hand. PHYLLIS at his other side.*

DICCON. They come down the long hill!

GILLIAN. I see them, the knaves!

PHYLLIS. Oh, Uncle, prythee forgive Rufus—save him quickly!

SIR G. [*angrily*]. He doth not desire forgiveness.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Uncle, he would have asked it but now. Thy bitter words did check him, and thou knowest he is proud. He could not ask it then.

GILLIAN. Here they be!

DICCON. At our very gates!

LADY K. [*above noise*]. My lord, thou dost know some secret place. Do but disclose it to me. Remember he is thine own flesh and blood.

DICCON. Hark, ye can hear them! [*Silence falls. In the distance the carol of the WAITS is heard.*]

PHYLLIS [*relieved*]. 'Tis the waits at their carols.

LADY K. [*thankfully*]. 'Tis not the soldiers, after all!

DICCON [*turning from window*]. Would it were not, my lady! Ye do hear the waits singing beneath the hall windows, 'tis true, but these at our gates be no peaceful carollers. [*Turns back to window. All are silent for a moment, listening, until the refrain of "Peace on earth" is reached.*]

SIR G. [*startled*]. "Peace on earth, good will to

men!" Now Heaven forgive my angry spirit! Here, Rufus—quick, lad! [*Touches spring at R. of portrait. Panel opens, and SIR GILBERT thrusts RUFUS through, and it closes behind him. SIR GILBERT turns and takes command.*] Clear the room—this throng will never do—guilt and suspicion sit upon our very faces. Wife, Phyllis! take these children to bed. Gillian! to the kitchen, wench, and do all in thy power to quiet the maidens there. Hasten to the gate, Diccon, and say that your master throws open his doors to their search. Bear yourselves, all, as if nothing had befallen! Now, haste!

[*Rapid clearing of the room. LADY KATHERINE and PHYLLIS hurry the children out (L.), trying to quiet them. Exeunt DICCON and GILLIAN by the door (R.). Unnoticed, RAFE springs into box of settle, and closes lid over him. When all are gone, SIR GILBERT goes quietly about room to put all in order. Looks out at window. Sounds from without, of beating on doors, etc. Cries, "Down with the false King!" "Death to traitors!" etc. SIR GILBERT goes to panel for a moment.*

SIR G. [*tapping*]. Rufus! Rufus!

RUFUS [*within*]. Yes, Father!

SIR G. Cheerly, good lad! Lie thou quiet, no harm shall come to thee. [*SIR GILBERT goes to chimney, takes an old book from shelf, and sits on settle. Noises of search gradually come nearer. Enter DICCON, followed by soldiers.*]

DICCON [*torn between his fear and hatred of the soldiers and his wish to propitiate them*]. Here is my lord, your masterships! He bade me give you free welcome

[*bows politely, but as they pass him he snarls aside*], and a pest upon all of ye!

SIR G. What would you of me, my men? Why, Diccon, these be all old neighbors—not soldiers.

[*The men are disconcerted, and advance awkwardly, pulling at their forelocks.*]

STEPHEN. Yes—Sir Gilbert—no, Sir Gilbert—we be verily soldiers—soldiers of the Parliament.

SIR G. You have taken up arms against your King? I had thought to see old neighbors and friends and loyal men. [*Rises, laying down book.*]

STEPHEN. We do be loyal men——

ANDREW. Loyal to the Parliament.

WAT. And soldiers of Cromwell.

SIR G. What, then, would you of me? Ye do know I am a subject of King Charles.

STEPHEN. My lord, we have orders to search this house.

SIR G. So be it, then. Obey your orders. What do ye look to find here?

ANDREW. 'Tis a false traitor Cavalier.

WAT. He lurketh here and we mean to have him, too.

STEPHEN. We would do our work peaceably, my lord. But our general must have the country cleared of all Malignants.

SIR G. You have my free consent. My house is open to you from turret's peak to the bins in the cellar.

DICCON. There be more of 'em, my lord—a round dozen. And they waited not thy permission. They be already both on tower and in bins.

SIR G. Disturb them not, good Diccon. [*Turns back*]

to settle, takes up book and pretends to read, but keeps a careful eye on soldiers.]

STEPHEN. Do your work with thoroughness, men.

ANDREW. That will we, captain!

WAT. There be many lurking-places in these old rats' nests.

ANDREW. We'll ferret him out!

WAT. Aye, aye—the false villain.

[They go carefully about room, lifting hangings, tapping walls and floor, trying to see behind picture-frames, coming very near secret door.]

STEPHEN. Have ye tested the walls?

WAT. Aye, and the floors.

ANDREW. There be no secrets here.

STEPHEN. Then we'll look further. Give ye good even, Sir Gilbert.

ANDREW. Mayhap we'll meet again——

WAT. Aye,—on the field of battle!

[Exeunt soldiers, with angry gestures. SIR GILBERT rises and bows slightly, signing to DICCON to follow. SIR GILBERT waits an instant, follows to door, then goes to window and watches. RAFE jumps out of box, and stands beside settle. Enter LADY KATHERINE, followed by PHYLLIS and GILLIAN, stealing in to peep out at window. Enter CICELY and ALLISON, catching at GILLIAN's skirts.]

ALLISON *[piteously]*. Gillian! Gillian!

CICELY. Oh, Gillian, don't leave us alone!

GILLIAN *[turns back]*. Never! my lambs. Have never a fear of that. *[Sits in chair (L.), gathers AL-*

LISON into her lap, drawing CICELY beside her. GILLIAN still looks anxiously towards window.]

PHYLLIS. There they go, those wicked men!

LADY K. Now Heaven be praised! [RAFE runs to stand at panel. Enter DICCON.]

DICCON. My lord and my lady—— [All turn. SIR GILBERT crosses stage to meet DICCON.] The knaves be all gone, sir. I shut the gate upon them with my own two hands. [Everyone takes a breath of relief. RAFE touches spring and RUFUS steps out and strides to his father.]

RUFUS. Father, let your son's first word be to crave pardon for all his willfulness!

SIR G. [clasping his hand warmly and putting an arm across his shoulder]. Nay, lad, 'tis freely given. Methinks I should first ask thine for all my hardness of heart.

[PHYLLIS goes to LADY KATHERINE, who turns and kisses her affectionately. They stand side by side.]

PHYLLIS. Our little Rafe has played the man and saved Rufus for us all.

LADY K. He is a brave little lad! But tell me, children, what doth it mean that you were out of your beds at such a strange hour?

RAFE. We got up to see our ancestors dance.

ALL. Ancestors dance!

SIR G. What meaneth the child?

RAFE. Why, sir, Gillian's grandam hath said to her, that when the midnight tolled on Christmas Eve, my lord and my lady here did step forth, clasp hands, and dance.

ALLISON. And so we came to see.

CICELY. And soothly, it was so. They came forth and danced, here in the shine of the fire. A brave sight, Father!

SIR G. Now, saints defend us! What is a man to make of this?

LADY K. Never heed them—'twas just a sleep-heavy fancy. A beautiful Christmas-tide dream.

RAFE. Nay, lady Mother, it was no dream. It was the spell of Christmas brought it all to pass.

SIR G. Now doth the lad speak truth, good friends! Verily it *is* the spell of Christmas which hath saved us all from sin and much sorrow this night. The spell of "Peace upon earth, good will to men." Hark, the waits are singing still—as angels sing, and ever shall sing the world around, on Christmas Eve.

[All stand listening for a moment to distant singing, then join in carol.]

CURTAIN

NOTES ON COSTUME, MUSIC, AND SETTING

Adult parts in this play taken by boys and girls of fifteen or sixteen. In contrast to these, the smaller the children playing Rafe, Cicely, and Allison, the better—Rafe not over eight, Cicely and Allison six and five years.

Costumes follow the Van Dyke pictures of Charles I and those of his children. Very helpful illustrations may also be found in "Merrylips," by Beulah Marie Dix. (The Macmillan Company.)

SIR GILBERT *and* RUFUS wear sleeveless jerkins made of tan-colored canton flannel to represent leather. Rufus wears boots and a broad-brimmed hat with plumes, and long cloak of the same color as his suit. These suits should be of rich colors in contrast to the sober colors of the Puritan soldiers, who also wear leather-colored jerkins and boots.

Cavaliers wear broad lace collars and cuffs, while the PURITAN SOLDIERS wear square linen collars and cuffs, and under-sleeves with stripes running around them of black and orange, the colors of the Parliament. Orange baldric over right shoulder. If possible, metal helmets, or firemen's helmets silvered to represent the steel caps of the time; otherwise, broad-brimmed felt hats with band or scarf of orange and black. They carry swords, cross-bows, or other arms.

LADY KATHERINE and PHYLLIS. Full, quilted petticoats, broad, deep-pointed lace collars and cuffs. Dressed

in rich colors. Lady Katherine wears a small lace cap upon her hair.

RAFE. Suit like the picture of Prince Charles. May wear a broad fringed sash, and fringed bows at his knees. Lace collar and cuffs. Sleeves may be slashed.

CICELY and ALLISON. Little short-waisted, quilted dresses, with flowered panels set in. Lace at the square necks and the elbow sleeves.

GILLIAN. Plainly made dress of flowered material. Skirt full, but not quilted. Short caps to the sleeves. White kerchief, apron, and plain white cap.

DICCON. Plain suit, like the Puritans, but less sober in color, and without the leather jerkin. Square linen collar and cuffs.

THE PORTRAITS. Costumes of an earlier century.

SIR PHILIP. Slashed doublet and trunks of rich color, and long stockings to match. Ruff, and plumed cap or hat of same material as doublet. Wears a dagger.

LADY GERALDINE. Dress of rich color to harmonize with Sir Philip's. Puffed and slashed sleeves, figured panel in front of skirt and waist, and panniers on hips. Ruff, and small beaded cap.

To stand in absolute stillness for so long a time is a difficult matter. Therefore the portraits must be careful to take poses which they can hold without too great a strain throughout the act.

MUSIC

Choose songs which, through their quaintness, may be in keeping with the atmosphere of the whole.

For the children:

"Waken, Christian children," *

* Words printed in "A Puritan Christmas," p. 136.

"The first Nowell the angel did say,"
or some other simple old carol.

For the Waits:

"From far away we come to you."

These three carols are all to be found in "Christmas Carols New and Old," Novello & Company. The last has been modernized and set to new music more suitable for children's voices by Mr. W. W. Gilchrist, and is to be found in a book containing many good carols for children ("The First Nowell" among them), "The New Hosanna."* Mr. Gilchrist's version omits the quaint refrains of the original—"The snow in the street, and the wind on the door," and "Minstrels and maids stand forth on the floor," and substitutes "Sing 'Glory to God' again and again," and "Peace upon earth, good will to men." These last words are necessary to the sense in two places, in the text of the play. When the play was first given, the Waits used the old refrains, and Mr. Gilchrist's, for alternate verses, thus gaining in quaintness of effect and at the same time avoiding monotony. For the midnight dance, use the Minuet from Mozart's "Don Giovanni."†

SETTING

If the first scene, which requires little furniture,—the table, a chair for Gillian, and low stools for the children,—can be set in front of the second, much time will be saved in the changing. One scene will serve for both acts, if the frames of the portraits can be covered with hangings during the first act. Mission furniture may

* See p. 315.

† See note, p. 146, in regard to the English, following "A Puritan Christmas."

be used, but if it is possible to obtain a carved chair and table, and appropriate objects to hang upon the wall,—one or two pieces of armor, a pair of antlers, etc.,—the effect can be much enhanced.

The secret door in the second act must be planned in accordance with the possibilities of one's stage. If scenery is used, one section may be opened wide enough for Rufus to pass through. Otherwise, arrange hangings so that he may appear to go through a door behind them.

THE BABUSHKA

A RUSSIAN LEGEND, IN ONE SCENE

CHARACTERS

THE BABUSHKA.

THE BARON.

PRINCE DIMITRI }
PRINCESS DAGMAR } His children.

KOLINKA }
MARIE }
MATRENA } Children of a peasant family.
SASCHA }
NICOLAS }
PAVLO }

OLD SEMYON }
IVAN, his grandson } The village fiddlers.

MICHAEL, SERGIUS, LEO, BORIS, }
PETER } Village
SOPHIA, NADIA, FEODOSIA, MASHA, } children.
MALASHKA, KATINKA, PRASKOVIA }

THE BABUSHKA

TIME: *Christmas Eve.*

SCENE: *Interior of a Russian "isba," or hut. Back R., door; L., window; through them a dreary winter landscape is visible. In the corner, by the window, a ledge with ikons and decorations. Right, Russian oven, with ladder to top. Bench runs under window and along wall. For other furniture, a few stools and a table, or large chest used as a table [L.], with a cloth, a loaf of bread, and a knife upon it. Down stage [R.], a cradle. On the floor, bear skins, or other furs. At rise of curtain, MARIE, seated by the table, braids a basket; MATRENA rocks cradle; KOLINKA sits by window, knitting; SASCHA lies on top of the oven; NICOLAS and PAVLO play on the floor. Children are singing the "Carol of the Birds."*

CAROL OF THE BIRDS

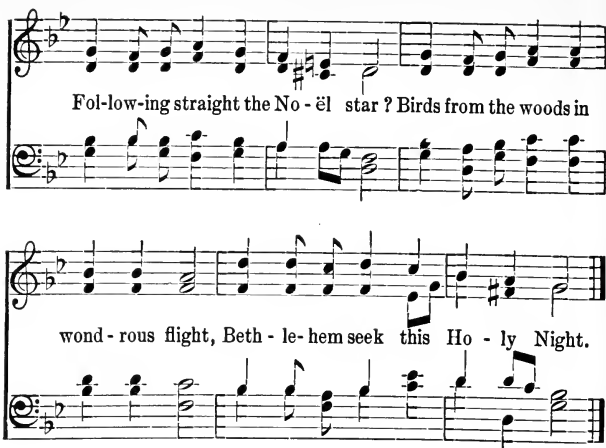
Not slow

BAS. QUERCY.

Whence comes this rush of wings a - far?

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in 4/4 time and have a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written on the top staff, and the lyrics are written below it. The bottom staff contains a simple harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Whence comes this rush of wings a - far?"

THE BABUSHKA



Fol-low-ing straight the No - ël star ? Birds from the woods in
wond - rous flight, Beth - le - hem seek this Ho - ly Night.

2. "Tell us, ye birds, why come ye here,
Into this stable, poor and drear ?"
"Hast'ning we seek the new-born King,
And all our sweetest music bring."
3. First came the Cock, ere break of day,
Strutting along in plumage gay,
Straight to the humble manger flew,
Chanting aloud *Coquerico*.
4. Then, near the Babe a Goldfinch drew,
Chirping with mirth *Tir-li-chiu-chiu*;
Chiu said the Sparrow in reply,
Pal-pa-bat was the Quail's quick cry.
5. Blackbirds then raised their sweetest notes;
Warbled the Linnets' tuneful throats!
Pigeons all cooed *Rou-cou-rou-cou*,
Larks sang with joy *Ti-ro-li-rou*.
6. Angels, and shepherds, birds of the sky,
Come where the Son of God doth lie;
Christ on the earth with man doth dwell,
Join in the shout, Noël, Noël!

KOLINKA. How lonely it is with Father away!

MARIE. Yes, and isn't it strange to think that all the houses in the village are just as quiet as ours?—on Christmas Eve, too.

SASCHA. I don't believe it ever happened before that the whole village had to turn out and hunt wolves on Christmas Eve.

MARIE. And if they hadn't had to do that I suppose Mother wouldn't have had to spend the day taking care of Petrovitch's sick wife, either.

KOLINKA. If the men were at home somebody would be coming in, or at least passing by.

MARIE. Oh, I do hope they will kill all those dreadful wolves so we shan't have to be afraid any more.

MATRENA. I'm so afraid Father will be hurt!

SASCHA [*with scorn*]. *Hurt*, Matrena! Of course he won't be hurt. Hasn't he always hunted wolves, every winter? But that's the way with you and Kolinka. I tell you *I'm* not afraid. I only wish I were older and bigger—then I could have gone, too. It's very slow to have to stay at home and take care of you girls. [*Yawns and stretches.*]

MARIE [*turning indignantly*]. Indeed, Sascha, it wouldn't be slow at all if you would do something beside lie up there on the stove and sleep. Here's the bowl you began to carve a month ago, not finished yet. Just come down now, and do it.

SASCHA. Oh, no! I like this better. And you know you would rather have me stay up here and tell you the news. [*Teasingly.*]

KOLINKA. News, indeed! What news can *you* have to tell, I should like to know?

SASCHA [*triumphantly*]. Just this. That the great castle up on the hill has been thrown open once more.

MARIE [*surprised*]. *Has it? Why?*

KOLINKA. I don't believe it.

SASCHA. It's true, though. Our father the Czar has pardoned the Baron, and he has come back from Siberia.

KOLINKA. Are you *sure*, Sascha? Where is the Baroness?

SASCHA. The men said so at the well this morning, so it must be true.

MATRENA. Did the Baron bring the little Prince and Princess with him?

SASCHA. *Of course* my lady and the children weren't in Siberia with the Baron. They've been in some foreign country—I forget where—all these years. And now the Baron has sent for them, and they have all come back to the castle to keep Christmas together.

MATRENA. Oh, how glad I am!

SASCHA. What are you glad for? It won't make any difference to *us*.

MATRENA. But I'm glad, anyway!

KOLINKA. Of course she is, and so we all are, Sascha—glad for the Baron and the lady, and the children, too.

NICOLAS. Did you say they were coming here, Sascha?

PAVLO. Are we going to see them?

SASCHA. No, of course not. They've come to the castle, and it will be the wonder of wonders if *we* see them.

KOLINKA [*kindly*]. Perhaps they will drive through the village in their beautiful sleigh, Nicolas, and then you and Pavlo will have a chance to see them.

SASCHA. They did say, at the village well, that now the Baron is home, there will be more strangers in the village again.

MARIE. All the better for the village, and that's a very good reason for you to come down and work, Sascha. We can sell what we make to these same strangers, and earn a few kopeks for poor Father.

SASCHA. That's so, Marie. [*Comes down ladder and begins to examine work.*] I believe I'll make some more forks and spoons. [*Consults MARIE in pantomime.*]

NICOLAS. Let's play wolf hunt, Pavlo! I'll be a wolf—— [*Covers himself with a skin.*]

PAVLO. And I'll be a hunter with a club! [*Jumps up and arms himself.* NICOLAS growls realistically. PAVLO prepares to strike.]

KOLINKA [*suddenly, in a startled voice*]. What's that outside!

NICOLAS. Bears!

PAVLO. No, it's a wolf! [*They throw down skin and club and fly to the top of the stove.*]

PAVLO and NICOLAS [*terror-stricken*]. Wolf! Wolf!

[MARIE and KOLINKA go to window.

SASCHA tries to see out, then goes to unbolt door.

MATRENA [*running to foot of ladder and shaking her finger at NICOLAS and PAVLO*]. You bad boys! you've waked the baby!

KOLINKA. Be quiet, boys! It's not a wolf at all.

MATRENA. Nor a bear, either. [*Rocks cradle, and pats and hushes baby.*]

MARIE. It's some poor body lost in the snow, perhaps.

[SASCHA gets door open and runs out.

SASCHA [*without*]. Have you lost your way? Come with me. Here is our door. It's a bitter cold night.

[MATRENA *leaves cradle and stands by* MARIE.

Enter SASCHA *with* PRINCE *and* PRINCESS. NICOLAS *and* PAVLO *watch with interest.*

KOLINKA [*going forward hospitably*]. Come in; you are very welcome. [*Sees the strange guests.*] Oh——

MARIE [*aside*]. Oh, Matrena, who can it be?

MATRENA [*aside*]. Marie, just see how beautifully they are dressed!

[*Children stand back abashed.* SASCHA *remains by door.*

PRINCE [*who leads* PRINCESS *by the hand*]. We thank you for taking us in. I am the Prince Dimitri from the castle, and this is my sister, the Princess Dagmar.

PRINCESS. And we have lost our way.

KOLINKA [*timidly*]. We—we didn't know who it was. I'm so glad we heard you.

MARIE [*gently taking* PRINCESS' *hand*]. Oh, Matrena, how cold her hand is! Come near our stove, my lady, and warm yourself.

[MARIE *and* MATRENA *rub the* PRINCESS' *hands while the boys on the stove peer down curiously.* The PRINCE *puts his hands against stove.* SASCHA *and* KOLINKA *stand staring at the strangers.*

SASCHA. How did you get lost?

PRINCE. We wanted to see our beautiful forest——

PRINCESS. You see, we have only been here for a few days.

PRINCE. So we started out for a little walk. We

didn't mean to go far at all, but before we knew it we had lost sight of the castle.

PRINCESS. And though we tried and tried to find it again, we kept getting deeper into the forest.

SASCHA. But how did you come to the village? It isn't very far from the castle, but it is hard to find unless you know the road, or just the right path in the forest.

KOLINKA. Yes, how did you come here?

PRINCESS. An old woman found us wandering about trying to find the path, and she brought us here. Such a strange old woman, all wrinkled and bent.

PRINCE. *She* seemed to know just how to come here, though I couldn't tell what was guiding her.

PRINCESS. And she was so good and kind to us—but she never spoke once, all the way.

MARIE [*clapping her hands*]. It must have been the Babushka!

SASCHA. Of course it was!

KOLINKA and MATRENA. How wonderful!

NICOLAS and PAVLO. Babushka! Babushka!

PRINCE [*puzzled*]. The Babushka?

PRINCESS. Who is she?

SASCHA. What! you, Russian children, and don't know that!

KOLINKA [*aside*]. Hush, Sascha, don't be rude. You forget they have been away ever since they were babies, almost. [*To PRINCE.*] We can tell you all about the Babushka, Prince. Sit down, and Marie will tell you the story. Marie knows it best. [*KOLINKA, SASCHA, and MARIE draw benches forward and all sit down, MARIE in the center, the rest not too close to her. PRINCE and PRINCESS on bench to R., MATRENA on end of MARIE'S bench. SASCHA stands near MATRENA. KOLINKA*

behind the group, knitting. NICOLAS and PAVLO watch gravely.]

NICOLAS. There aren't any bears or wolves coming, Pavlo?

PAVLO. No. And Marie's going to tell a story.

NICOLAS. Let's get down. [*They scramble down the ladder, and seat themselves at MARIE'S feet.*]

MARIE. Was the old woman in the forest all dressed in gray?

PRINCESS. Yes, all in a long gray cloak, with a queer white cap on her head.

MARIE. Yes. Then I'm certain it was the Babushka. She is sure to be wandering about on Christmas Eve.

PRINCE. Is she?

PRINCESS. Why?

MARIE. That's what the story is about. Once upon a time, hundreds and hundreds of years ago, there was a lonely little house out in the fields where four great roads met.

SASCHA. And by the house there was a big guide-post that pointed four ways at once, to show people which road to take. [*Stretches out both arms and swings his body slowly to show how the post points.*]

MARIE. Babushka lived all alone in the little cottage. In the summer the place didn't seem so lonely, for the banks at the road-side were covered with bright flowers, and the days were long and full of sunshine. But in the winter everything was white as far as Babushka could see, and the wind howled, and the wolves howled, and the birds were all gone. And Babushka was poor, and old, and lonely. One winter day, when she was hurrying to get her work all done and her house tidied before the dark came down, because she was too poor to buy candles

for herself, she heard a strange sound outside like silver bells ringing above the whistling wind. She looked out of her little window and saw a great train of people coming down the broadest of the roads toward the cross-road. She never had seen anything so strange before, for the leaders were not traveling in sleighs or on horseback, but on three great splendid white camels. The silver bells were hung about the camels' necks, and their saddles were decorated with silver ornaments. And on the camels rode Three Kings. Babushka knew they were kings because they were so richly dressed and because each one wore a golden crown on his head. And after them followed a long train of servants and guards. The Kings did not know which road to take, and one of the servants was sent to knock on Babushka's door and ask the way. At first the old woman was so frightened that she wouldn't open the door, nor answer at all, and the Kings themselves had to get down from their camels and come to speak with her. The servants frightened Babushka, but the Kings were so kind to her that she soon told them all she knew about the four great roads. It wasn't very much, for she had never traveled further than the nearest village, but she told the Kings that there they could find shelter for themselves and their camels and their servants.

Then the first King said: "We have journeyed a very long way, Babushka. We have been guided on the road by a glorious, shining Star, and we know that by and by the Star will lead us to a little new-born Baby."

The poor old Babushka wondered very much, and said: "Who is the little child, my lord, that you should take such a long, hard journey to find him?"

And the first King said: "He is a great King—the

King of all the earth. When we find Him we will lay our crowns at His feet, with these gifts we have brought—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. We are called Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar.”

Babushka listened and looked. She saw the gold crowns, and she saw that each one of the Kings bore in his hand a gift—one held a richly embroidered bag which looked heavy, and it was, for it was filled with gold. Another carried a beautiful crystal jar full of something clear and golden. Babushka knew this must be myrrh, and suddenly she knew, too, that the fragrance of spices filling the poor little house must come from the incense in the stone vase she saw in the hands of the third King.

She listened and looked, and then she said: “Kings have no need of gifts, my lord. Why do you carry these gifts to the little child?”

And the first King said: “Because this King of all the Earth is the King of Love, or He would not have come down into the world as a little child. And because we love Him more than everything else, we are bringing Him the very best that we have.”

And the second King said: “Come, Babushka, go with us on our journey to find the Christ-Child. He has come into the world to love and help just such poor old creatures as you.”

And the third King said: “There is room in His heart for you, and we will gladly help you on the journey to Him.”

And all the Kings begged her to go with them. But Babushka was afraid and unwilling. She saw how cold and dreary it was outside, and she knew that she was warm and dry in her little hut, even if she was so poor.

She didn't know anything better than just to have enough to eat, and a fire to keep her warm. She looked up into the dark, threatening sky, and couldn't see any marvelous star through the thick clouds. And, besides, she wanted to finish sweeping up her house. She must surely do that first of all. But the Kings could not wait, so they mounted their camels again, and soon Babushka heard the music of the silver bells growing fainter and fainter in the distance. All the next day, and the day after, and the day after that, and every day all the year, and through all the years, Babushka thought of her strange visitors. And still more she thought of the little Child. And the more she thought, the more she grew to love Him, until at last she began to wish she had gone with the Three Kings. She grew more and more unhappy about it, until one day she made up her mind that she would set out alone to try to find the Child. She forgot how many, many years had gone by since the visit of the Kings, and she didn't know that the Child had gone back to His Throne in Heaven again. She locked her little cottage and set out, going from village to village and from house to house, everywhere seeking for the Christ-Child. When she found a little child who was kind and loving and true, she said to herself: "This little one looks as the Child I am seeking must have looked," and it made her very happy. But still she didn't find the Child the Kings had found.

And, Princess, though it all happened such hundreds and hundreds of years ago, the Babushka is still hurrying over the world in winter time, looking in every nursery and every cottage for the little Christ-Child. She comes in softly with just a rustle of her skirts, and bends over

the beds where little children lie asleep. She always puts some small gift on the pillow, and steals silently out again. It is only the children that are good and quiet who ever see her, and she makes friends with them and gives them Christmas presents. But she loves the babies best of all, I know, because she still hopes to find among them the Baby who was laid in a manger on the first Christmas.

MATRENA [*after an instant's pause, pointing to window*]. Someone is at the window!

PRINCESS. I see her—it's the old woman who led us out of the forest!

SASCHA. It's the Babushka!

KOLINKA. Perhaps she will come in. Let's be very quiet.

MATRENA. Let's sing—the Babushka loves our carols.

[*Children sing softly the carol of the Birds. Enter BABUSHKA, very quietly. Lays her hand on PAVLO'S, then on NICOLAS' head, and gazes earnestly at them.*

[*Kneels by cradle, bending over the baby, and kisses it. Rises, stands watching the children a moment, then glides silently out. Children see her pass window, then the song ceases.*

PRINCESS [*suddenly springing up*]. Oh, Dimitri, why didn't we beg the Babushka to take us home to the castle? Our Father and Mother will be so terribly frightened when we don't come back!

PRINCE [*hurrying to door*]. Perhaps it isn't too late.

SASCHA [*catching his arm, and standing before the door*]. No, no! you couldn't catch her.

KOLINKA. And you mustn't go out in the cold again.

PRINCESS [*in great distress*]. But we must let our father know we are safe!

KOLINKA. We will send a messenger as soon as we can, but there is no one in the village to-night——

SASCHA. The wolves have been so bad that all the men have gone out to hunt them.

KOLINKA. Perhaps someone will be back soon, and then we can send. It isn't safe for the boys to go alone into the forest so late.

SASCHA [*to PRINCE*]. Father made me promise not to go away until he came home. I'm not a bit afraid, though.

KOLINKA. Sascha, run and ask old Semyon what he thinks. [*Exit SASCHA.*] Sascha will bring Semyon back with him.

NICOLAS. Perhaps Ivan will come, too.

MATRENA. Ivan and Semyon play their violins and sing—Ivan is Semyon's grandson, you know.

PAVLO. And we sing, too.

NICOLAS. We'll sing for you when they come.

PRINCE. Will you? That's nice.

MARIE. We sing all the songs we know on winter nights. And while we sing we work. See, Princess, this is our winter work.

[PRINCE and PRINCESS go to table and look over wooden articles and baskets, with MARIE and MATRENA. KOLINKA stands by window.]

NICOLAS [*to PAVLO*]. I'm glad I wasn't big enough to go wolf-hunting, aren't you, Pavlo, because now we've seen the Prince and the Princess.

PAVLO. And Sascha said they wouldn't come here——

but they did. Let's go up on the stove again, Nicolas.
[*They climb upon the stove.*]

KOLINKA. There they come. [*Opens door. Enter SASCHA, SEMYON, and IVAN.*] Did you tell Semyon, Sascha?

SASCHA. Yes, and he says we must wait.

SEMYON. Good-evening to you all.

CHILDREN. Good-evening.

SEMYON [*bowing*]. It's a poor, cold welcome home we give to our Prince and Princess, but we are glad to see them among us again.

PRINCE. I'm sure they've all been kind, little father.

SEMYON [*bowing again, to PRINCE*]. I'm sorry, my lord, that there is no way to send a message to the Baron, but our boys are too young, and I am too feeble. The men will be at home soon, I hope, and meanwhile you must be patient.

MARIE. Oh, Semyon, let us have some carols [*to PRINCESS*], and then the time will go quickly.

SEMYON. Ivan and I are always glad to make music on Christmas Eve.

IVAN. Or any other eve, either, Grandfather.

[*SEMYON sits in center of stage, IVAN standing beside him. They play their violins and sing the ballad of King Wenceslas, all the children joining in the chorus.*]

NICOLAS. Sister, sister, I hear somebody shouting, outside!

SASCHA [*rushing to door*]. The men come back from the wolf hunt!

IVAN. Let's see what they've killed. [*Exeunt IVAN and SASCHA.*]

KOLINKA. No, it's not our father—they're all men that look like soldiers.

MARIE. It's the people from the castle come to look for you!

[*Door flies open. Enter IVAN and SASCHA with BARON. PRINCE and PRINCESS rush to him.*]

PRINCE and PRINCESS. Father! Father!

BARON. My children! Are you both safe?

PRINCESS. Oh, yes, Father. These children have been so good to us.

BARON. Have they, my dear? Then they have been good to me, too, and I thank them with all my heart.

KOLINKA. Oh, we haven't done anything, sir!

PRINCE. Tell us how you found out where we were, Father?

BARON. In rather a queer way, my son. We didn't miss you just at once, but as soon as we knew you were gone everyone was in a great fright, you may be sure. I started out with Sergius and Smoloff, and half a dozen others to search for you in the forest. We hadn't gone a hundred yards from the castle when we met the strangest little old woman I ever saw, all dressed in gray, and wrinkled and bent——

PRINCESS [*clapping her hands*]. The Babushka, Father, the Babushka!

MARIE, SASCHA, and KOLINKA. The Babushka took the message!

PRINCE. It was she who brought us here!

SEMYON. Have you never heard of the Babushka, Baron?

BARON. Yes, yes! I know the old story of the Babushka, but I never saw her before.

IVAN. She always comes to our village at Christmas time. We don't all see her every year, but somebody always sees her.

PRINCE. What did she do, Father?

BARON. She did not speak at all. She looked at us for a moment with the softest eyes imaginable, and then she stooped down and pointed to your footprints in the snow. Then she pointed toward the village, smiled, and beckoned to us to follow her. It seemed as if she must have guessed our trouble, and she seemed so sure and so full of cheer, that we couldn't help believing we should find you, and followed her at once. I must reward her liberally for the great service she has done me and mine this night.

MARIE. The Babushka wants no reward, Baron. You know what it is she has been searching for all these years? Grandmother says it was Love the Babushka wanted, and she has surely found it, for every little child in Russia loves her dearly, dearly, and watches for her at Christmas time.

IVAN. And when she comes, the children sing their carols for her. But the one she loves best is the "Golden Carol"—that's the song of the Three Kings, you know, sir.

SEMYON [*in doorway*]. The Babushka is coming now, with her followers, my lord. Here they are! [*Enter a troop of village children, the BABUSHKA in their midst, smiling on them, and now and then patting some little one on the head. She stands in the center of the stage and distributes gifts to the children from a quaint basket, answering their cries and questions by nods and smiles, each child exclaiming "Thank you!" "How nice!" etc., as he receives his gift.*]

CHILDREN. Oh, Babushka! dear, good Babushka!

SOPHIA. Have you got something for everybody?

MALASHKA. Are you quite sure?

SERGIUS. Me, too, Babushka!

MASHA. I've tried to be good, all the whole year!

CHILDREN. We all have, *truly*, Babushka.

SERGIUS. I've had good lessons—you can ask the school-teacher.

KATINKA. My mother says I've been a good girl—aren't you glad?

PETER. Please, Babushka—I—I'm afraid I haven't been a very good boy. But I'm sorry, and I'll try to do better next year. I'll be bigger, then.

PRASKOVIA. We'll all be very, very good next year—won't we, children?

CHILDREN. Indeed we will, Babushka.

BORIS. Perhaps it will be easier next year.

FEODOSIA. Oh, please, Babushka, I have a baby brother at home. Could you give me something for him?

LEO. My big brother has gone wolf-hunting with the men, but he'll be sorry enough he missed you, Babushka.

MICHAEL. So has mine, and he'll be sorry, too.

NADIA. Dear Babushka, I've kept the present so carefully that you gave me last year.

MALASHKA. Oh, *did* you? Mine got broken and I cried.

CHILDREN. Oh, Babushka, we love you, we love you! Why can't you stay with us always? Live here with us—in our village.

SASCHA. Babushka! You must have something for the Prince and Princess, haven't you?

*[As the BABUSHKA gives them something, the
BARON turns to the children.]*

BARON. Children, the Babushka has given the best present of all to me.

[*Children stare in surprise.*

MARIE. Oh, I know! I know what it was!

BARON. Yes, some of you can guess. The Prince and the Princess were my Christmas present, for the Babushka gave them back to me.

[*Children laugh and clap.*

SEMYON [*tapping his violin for quiet*]. Come, children, we must sing for the Babushka!

CHILDREN. Yes—we always do. [*Applaud again.*
SEMYON and IVAN *play, while children sing "The Golden Carol."*]

THE GOLDEN CAROL

Vivace.

of MELCHIOR, BALTHAZAR, and GASPAR.

We saw a light shine out a - far, On Christmas in the

morn - ing, And straight we knew Christ's star it was, Bright

beam - ing in the morn - ing. Then did we fall on

bend - ed knee, On Christ - mas in the morn - ing, And

praised the Lord, who'd let us see, His glo - ry at its dawn - ing.

2. Oh, ever thought be of His Name,
On Christmas in the morning,
Who bore for us both grief and shame,
Afflictions sharpest scorning.
And may we die (when death shall come)
On Christmas in the morning,
And see in heaven, our glorious home,
That Star of Christmas morning.

CURTAIN

NOTES ON SETTING, MUSIC, AND COSTUME

RUSSIAN OVEN. Made from a wooden packing-case, five or six feet in height, covered with cambric, and painted to represent stone, brick, or tiles. These stoves are decorated with rich panels in bold conventional designs of flower or animal forms, or combinations of geometrical figures. They are often so large that in the bitter weather whole families may sleep on their tops, or on a platform above.

IKONS. Pictures of the Christ, the Madonna, and the Saints, much ornamented with gilt, and placed on a ledge in "the beautiful corner," with candles in silver candlesticks, sweet-smelling grasses, and flowers, real or of paper. Sometimes a carved wooden pigeon is also placed before the ikons—the emblem of the Holy Spirit. The wall in this corner is hung with long towels, either covered with embroidery, or embroidered at the ends. Everyone who enters the room makes an obeisance, and crosses himself, before the ikons. They are specially decorated for Christmas.

Make the towels with stencils, as described in the notes on girls' costumes.

The same characteristic designs are placed on ledges, cupboards, and shelves, on the chest, or coffer, and ceiling beam, on carved wooden boxes, dishes, and jugs, which are often displayed on a sideboard. The knife and loaf placed on the coffer constitute a symbol of hospitality.

The decoration of the stage need be limited only by time and resources.

MUSIC

Search for information in regard to carol-singing in Russia having been unsuccessful, old carols have been chosen which lend an atmosphere of quaintness. The "Carol of the Birds" is old French, the others English, "The Golden Carol" of the Magi being especially appropriate to the story.

The sources for "Good King Wenceslas" are given on p. 316. The singing of this carol (also the "Golden Carol") is accompanied by the Village Fiddlers on their violins. Semyon sings the part of the King, Ivan that of the Page, all the children the narrative parts.

Others, with better knowledge of the subject, may be able to obtain music more strictly suitable. The author would be glad to gain any accurate information in regard to the use of Christmas carols in Russia.

COSTUMES

Boys wear Russian blouses, and dark trousers, their legs bound, from feet to knees, with yellowish rags; shoes suggesting moccasins. Blouses may be made of canton flannel, white, or dull colors, or of unbleached muslin, reaching halfway to knees. Neck finished in a band; opening from collar down left side is not more than six or eight inches, giving just room enough to put the head through. Trim this collar and opening, also sleeves, with fur; or put on a conventional border with stencil and paints, narrow at neck opening, broad on sleeves. Tie in at waist with a short sash, ends hanging, of bright color to match borders.

Outdoor winter costume of boys is a very thick, very full-skirted coat of dark color, immense boots, cap of fur, or fur-bordered, and bright scarf about neck, ends tucked into breast of coat. The village children, however, may be supposed to rush in from their houses, after the Babushka, without coats, but dressed as above, which is both simpler and more picturesque.

GIRLS' costumes vary a little more.

1. Sleeveless dress, to ankles; white guimpe, long full sleeves. Dress of bright colors, with band of plain color edging bottom of skirt, neck, both of dress and guimpe, and bordering white sleeves. Apron, white, with stenciled designs in various colors.

2. Skirt to ankles, of soft faded blue or red, worn high on the short white waist, which has full sleeves, gathered in a band at the elbow. Trimmed with stenciled bands in bright colors, at hem of skirt, on neck and sleeves, and also at the edge of an immense handkerchief worn on the head and knotted under the chin. This is large enough to spread out over shoulders, and is straight across the back.

3. Plain narrow skirt of soft color, with a long-sleeved apron (cream white), low-necked in front, and cut like an Eton jacket in the back. This skirt has a band of plain color at the hem, but the apron is trimmed with many rows of stenciled patterns at the bottom, a narrow pattern at neck and hand, and a broader one around the back at the waist. White chemisette in front, also with band of trimming.

Girls wear knots of ribbon hanging from the ends of their braids, many strings of bright beads on the neck, and large gold hoops, or enameled earrings in their ears.

They may wear low shoes with bows or buckles, or the soft, thick moccasin-like shoes worn by the boys.

Some few may be bareheaded. Others wear the large handkerchiefs described above, and still others the picturesque "kokochnik," a velvet, bead-trimmed crescent, worn forward on the head as in the picture of "Marie." These are easily cut from cardboard, covered with velvet, and trimmed in different patterns with small beads.

The stenciled patterns above-mentioned take the place of Russian embroideries. They are repeated conventional designs, Greek patterns, and fantastic forms of flowers, birds, and animals. Stenciling is suggested as being the easiest and quickest way of getting the desired effect.

THE BABUSHKA. Long robe, and hooded cloak of light gray canton flannel. The hood is worn over the head. She carries a quaint basket filled with cheap little toys.

An adult is needed for this part, or an older girl of sufficient insight and appreciation to carry out the simple pantomime and fill it with the love and deep yearning of the Babushka, who is really a spirit, and not a human being at all.

THE BARON. Long military coat, below knees; cream-colored, trimmed on breast with a pattern in gold braid, a band of same around the edge and up the slits at the sides. Double collar, standing up behind head and lying flat across back, scarlet with a gilt pattern. Scarlet sash with sword or dagger. Red boots with blue heels. Spurs. Sleeves open from shoulder to fur-trimmed cuff, and worn hanging. Under-sleeve, and lining of coat-sleeve of a rich color. Hat with flat-topped crown about eight inches high, scarlet, with gold pattern; stand-

ing brim, dark brown, three inches high, cleft in front to show more of red and gold. Gilt cockade in front.

PRINCE. Russian blouse with military trimmings, scarlet and white. Khaki trousers, boots, fur cap.

PRINCESS. White cape and hood, trimmed with fur and silver. Dress underneath not unlike the little peasants', but more richly trimmed.

OLD SEMYON. Long brown robe, half-way below knees, skirt rather full. Legs bound in tan-colored rags. Moccasins. Coat has broad collar with long reverses, and plain high vest inside, of same material as coat. Hat made of the same, low, with rolling brim, giving a turban-like effect. Long white hair and beard.

Marie, the eldest of the children, is perhaps fourteen; Kolinka, twelve; Matrena, nine; Sascha, Ivan, and the Prince, eleven or twelve; Pavlo and Nicolas, five or six; the Princess, nine. The Village children should be rather small.

Satisfactory pictures of Russian homes and costumes are very difficult to find, but there is a series of fairy-tales in Russian, beautifully illustrated in color, which will be found most helpful to those wishing to make costumes for this play. These books are to be had at the Russian Importing Company, 452 Boylston Street, Boston, and may also be seen in some of the larger Public Libraries.

A CANVAS CHRISTMAS

IN TWO ACTS

CHARACTERS

PETER PEPPER, Ringmaster, and owner of Pepper's
Perennial Circus.

HARRY HOPKINS	}	otherwise MARCO BROTHERS,	}	
LIMBER JACK		Acrobats.		
BARNEY O'BRIEN	}	other-	}	} Clowns.
JERRY PICKLE		wise		
			CELLI	
			SIGNOR COCO-	
			DILLA	

BEN JACKSON, otherwise MR. BARLOW, Minstrel and
hand.

DUTCH, peanut-man and general factotum.

MIKE MCGINNIS, otherwise PROFESSOR WORMWOOD,
Animal-trainer.

TIM, one of the hands.

SCHNEIDER, the Dog.

JOCKO, the Monkey.

FARMER SIMPSON.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SIMPSON—"BUB"—	}	
(Eight years old.)		
DANIEL WEBSTER SIMPSON—"SONNY"—		
(Five years old.)		his boys.

A CANVAS CHRISTMAS

Written for a club of boys from twelve to seventeen.

ACT I

TIME: *Ten o'clock on Christmas Eve.*

SCENE: *The mess-tent of Pepper's Perennial Circus, very bare and shabby, with circus litter about; signs, "No Smoking," "Next performance, 2 P.M.," posters, etc., on the tent walls; a rough mess-table of boards and trestles, with boxes, stools, two broken chairs, etc., for seats. Pile of old blankets in one corner. Lantern hangs in center of tent, and another [L.] at entrance to circus tent. [R.], another exit, leading out of doors. Music [if possible] from circus tent, playing last strains of "Home, Sweet Home." Burst of applause from circus tent, the flaps part, and the troupe enters [excepting PEPPER, MIKE, and the animals], weary and discontented, and drop down anywhere to rest. HOPKINS throws himself on pile of blankets [R.], JACK takes a box nearby, BARNEY sits on table, and JERRY goes to entrance [R.], fanning himself with his hat. BEN takes box [L.], and DUTCH enters last, slipping the straps of his peanut-tray from his shoulders and setting it on the end of the table.*

HARRY [*sullenly*]. This 'ere's the worst night we've 'ad yet.

JACK. You bet yer life!

BARNEY. Faix! I've no futs left an me at all, at all!

TIM [*rubs his arms*]. I'm lame all over. It's me for the liniment bottle!

JERRY. I'm as tired as any of you guys, but I'm a good deal madder than I'm tired.

JACK. I should say.

HARRY. 'Ow could we be h'anything but tired and h'angry, I'd like to h'arsk, with such a boss as old Pepper?

BEN. Gen'lemen—Mr. Pepper he su'tinly war pretty bad, dis evenin'—in fac' I may say he war de limit.

JERRY. And no excuse for it, either.

BARNEY. Was it excuse, ye said?

DUTCH. Mishter Pepper he don't waits for no excuse. You'd t'ink ve vas all der lazy loafers—und der ain'd a lazy bone in der whole boonch.

[*Enter MIKE, with dog, and leading monkey.*

MIKE. The sound of yez all is quite familiar. Be ye knockin' the boss again?

BEN. We-all got mighty good reason, Mr. McGinnis.

HARRY. 'E's not getting a think but wot 'e's earned for 'isself.

JACK. Work a fellow to skin and bone!

BARNEY. Wid nary bit o' regard to his iligant muscle, Limber Jack?

JACK. It's true—no joshin', Barney!

BARNEY. Niver a bit of it, darlin'!

JERRY. It's all work and no rest——

MIKE. And niver a dacint worrud, even for the dumb bastes—— [*Pats dog and monkey. Dog goes about from one to another expecting pats and caresses, which are absent-mindedly given. Monkey, unobserved, steals peanuts from tray.*]

TIM. Nothing but blame, morning, noon, and night!

DUTCH. Und ven der vork is ofer, ve don't ge's nod-dings enough to eats—ain'd?

BEN. Gentlemen, I'm 'bliged to admit dat I'm hungry all de day long!

HARRY. H'and h'all night, you might say, and no h'exaggeratin'.

TIM. We're all of us half starved.

JERRY [*warningly*]. Here's the boss, fellows!

[*Enter PETER, striding into tent and giving an angry glance around.*]

PETER [*suspiciously*]. What are you all doing here? You, Tim, get a hustle on and put out those lights in the big tent. [*Exit TIM, slowly and sullenly.*] Mike McGinnis, go put your beasts in their cages—look at that monkey wasting the peanuts! Dutch, you aren't worth your salt—can't you take care of your stuff? [*MIKE, with an injured air, leads out monkey and whistles dog after him. DUTCH, much aggrieved, takes up tray, and moves it to another place.*] Jerry Pickle, if you and O'Brien can't ring in something new for your turn, you'll soon be given the hook, and Ben's jokes are all stale enough to crumble. As for you, Hopkins, I consider your riding to-night a flunk, and you and Jack are no acrobats at all—you're just a couple of dubs. The show's always had the name of a first-class show, and it's going to keep up to it, if I've got to throw you all out and get a new lot. So you want to look out—see? [*Exit angrily.*]

HARRY [*jumping up*]. There's a-goin' to be h'end of this—as sure as my name's 'Arry 'Opkins!

JERRY. Well, I'm with you, for one. We never go into winter quarters for a rest——

HARRY. No, for the h'old skinflint goes and brings 'is bloomin' show South——

JERRY. So's he can keep open all year round, and double his profits.

DUTCH. Und vat does ve get oud of ut? Yust nod-dings.

JERRY. I should say not! We're half paid and half fed, and worked double, and I for one have took all I'll stand.

JACK. I'm with you there.

TIM. So'm I, Jerry.

BARNEY. Bedad, it's in the same box we all are.

MIKE. True for you, Barney. We'd all better be quittin'.

BEN. Gen'lemen! dis yere 'lustrous Company a' unanimous. We all 'low dat Mr. Pepper have got to reform. We-all mus' draw up a partition an' prohibit Mr. Pepper for conduc' unbecomin' to a Ringmaster. Gen'lemen, let us take action.

HARRY. H'action be blowed! If it's 'ighly satisfactory to h'agitate petitions, or throw up your jobs—w'y, I calls that just nothin' doin'. No h'Ai h'acrobat is a-goin' to stand bein' told 'e's flunked in his best h'act. I don't till I've pied 'im h'up.

[A murmur of assent, and all draw closer about him (R. front), speaking with lowered voices.]

BARNEY. That's something like talk, that is!

MIKE. I'm wid yez, Harry, me b'y.

JERRY. I'd like to burn his old show over his head.

TIM. Just doctor his wagon-axles a little, and when they break down, we'll take to the woods!

JACK. *Much* he'll get a new lot.

BEN. No, gen'lemen—I got dat proposition beat——

[*Words become inaudible; they draw closer yet. The canvas (back Center) parts. Enter BUB and SONNY, very cautiously and timidly, peering about. They come forward a little, and pause, looking at group.*]

BUB. This is sure enough the circus, Sonny. Look at those men.

[*The troupe fall apart guiltily, and look with amazement at the children.*]

BUB [*grips SONNY's hand and comes forward slowly*]. Please, mister, is the circus all over?

BEN. Laws, honey, you didn' 'spec' to fin' no circus dis time o' night?

BARNEY. Sure, an' ut's time we was all tucked into our little beds, an' the same to *you*, bedad.

HARRY. Maybe you'll do us the honor to tell us your names?

BUB [*impressively*]. My name is Benjamin Franklin Simpson.

SONNY. An' mine is Daniel Webster Simpson.

MIKE [*pretends to faint*]. Oh, would some of yez have the goodness to fan me! [JACK *obliges him.*]

JERRY. Give us a shorter one! They don't call you that every time you get your orders, I'm sure.

[*Enter PEPPER, watching unnoticed from background.*]

BUB. No; I'm just Bub, and he's Sonny.

TIM. That's more like it.

JACK. Breathe easy, Mike.

HARRY. Well, Mr. Benjamin Franklin Bub, will you h'inform us where you 'ails from?

BUB. We live over the mountain, by Pinesburg, an' we wanted to see the circus, so we just ran off and came.

JERRY. Pinesburg—that's ten miles off. How'd you say you come?

BUB. Just walked.

SONNY [*rubbing his fists in his eyes*]. An' the circus is all over, an' I'm so tired! [*Men murmur sympathetically, and the group breaks and re-forms around the boys. Men gather about, some squatting near the boys, others standing behind.*]

BARNEY. Futtet it ivery shtep!

MIKE. Tired, is it?—yez must be dead!

HARRY. Poor kids!

DUTCH. Und ve all leafin' der kinder shtandin'. Here—der box seats ain'd all sold yet. [*Brings box and seats them kindly.*]

BEN [*kneeling before them*]. Why—dey shoes is all bust out——

JERRY. The poor kids ought to be in bed.

TIM. Did you have any supper?

JACK. When did you say you started?

BUB. Right after dinner, an' we thought we could get here for the show to-night, but, you see, Sonny couldn't walk very fast——

SONNY [*sets up a howl, gives BUB a punch that nearly knocks him off the box, and rubs his eyes harder than ever*]. I did, too, now, Bub! I walked an' I walked an' I walked, so I did! An' I want my supper, I do, an' I want to go to bed!

JERRY. Hustle off, Dutch, and get the poor kid some grub——

[*Exit DUTCH in haste.*]

BARNEY. Sure an' one of them can bunk with me.

JACK. I'll take the other in my bunk.

MIKE. If it's blankets they're wantin' they're welcome to mine.

BEN. Dey's lots ob blankets, gen'lemen! I'll fix 'em a place tergedder as sof' as a fedder-bed!

[PEPPER comes forward.

HARRY [*under his breath*]. 'Ere's the h'old h'ogre wot'll scare 'em to death.

PEPPER [*with unexpected amiability*]. That's right, Ben, make 'em up a good bed in the sleeping-tent with the extra blankets. What do you fellows suppose their marm's thinking, about now? [*Exit BEN.*] You kids, did you say you *ran away*?

BUB [*a little frightened*]. Ye-es, sir—we couldn't help it. You see—our folks is *strict*. They never went to circuses, and they don't let their boys go.

PEPPER. Well, has your folks got a telephone?—most farmers 've got 'em these days.

BUB and SONNY. Yes, sir——

PEPPER [*giving TIM money*]. Here, Tim, you run out and telephone to—— Simpson, is it?

BUB. Yes, sir,—Jonathan Simpson.

PEPPER. And tell him his kids are safe, and we'll take care of 'em all right. [*TIM starts out.*] And, Tim—— [*Follows him and speaks aside.*] Fix it up with him to let 'em stay to the afternoon show.

[PEPPER lingers with TIM at tent door.

Troupe overcome with surprise.

BARNEY. Will yez all hark to that!

HARRY. I didn't think 'as 'ow 'e 'ad h'it h'in 'im!

OTHERS. No!

[*Enter DUTCH with thick sandwiches, which the boys munch eagerly. PEPPER comes forward and watches,*

DUTCH. So! Das ist besser.

BEN. How'd dat chile's sho't legs ebber do ten mile, anyhow?

JERRY. Pretty sandy, that!

PEPPER. What did you boys run away for on Christmas Eve—weren't you afraid of missing your presents and the Christmas Tree?

BUB [*between bites*]. Presents? We don't get none!

SONNY. I never saw a Christmas Tree. [*He grows very sleepy and leans his head against BUB, who keeps moving and letting it slip off while talking with the men.*]

DUTCH [*horrified*]. You don't effer hafe no Christmas?

BUB. No. I told you our folks is *strict*. My dad didn't let us go to the Christmas Tree they had at the Sunday-school, neither.

PEPPER. I didn't suppose that kind of strictness was left in the country.

BUB [*with conviction*]. My dad's that kind of strict.

BEN. Dat po' chile's mos' ersleep now. Come on, honey. Ben'll take you to bed. [*Lifts SONNY in his arms.*]

PEPPER. That's right, Ben. Run on with him, Bub—Ben'll take care of you. [*Exit BEN, with children. Enter TIM.*] Well, Tim, did you get Simpson?

TIM. Yes, sir, and he says he'll come and fetch the kids in the morning—he won't on no account let them stay to see the show.

[*General groan of indignation.*]

BARNEY. The like of him ain't fit to live!

HARRY [*disgusted*]. Wot sort of chap do you call that!

JERRY. Can't we do nothin' about it?

PEPPER. Sure you did your best, Tim?—you didn't make him mad, maybe?

TIM. *Me?* No, sir! But he was madder about the kids than he was scared about them, I reckon.

MIKE. An' does he think he desarves to get thim back, I'd like to know? Let's kape thim ourselves!

JACK. We need a couple of kids in the show. That Bub's a sharp one!

PEPPER. No, fellows—that won't do. Perhaps the mother's a different kind.

[*Enter BEN, speaks to MIKE. The rest listen.*]

BEN. Dey's jus' wore out, dose chillen—done fall ersleep 'fo' I got de blanket over dem.

JERRY. I tell you what, fellows. That old flub of a farmer won't get in very early—let's give 'em a show all to themselves. What say?

JACK. Bully scheme!

MIKE. That's classy, that is!

HARRY [*aside to JERRY*]. S'pose the boss'll let us do a stunt like that? Not on yer life!

PEPPER. Very good idea, Barney. You'll have all morning for it, sure.

[*Troupe surprised and delighted. General hum of pleasure.*]

PEPPER [*clearing his throat and hesitating a little*]. Oh—a—a—I was going to say—these kids seem to have rather a slow time of it. What do you fellows say we do it up brown—go the whole figure and—well, a little Christmas won't hurt us, either. Let's give them a Christmas Tree. I'll set up the fixin's for it!

[*An instant's pause of utter amazement, then a hubbub of enthusiasm and approval, interrupted by BEN.*]

BEN [*coming forward, raps on the mess-table and raises his voice*]. Gen'lemen! I'd like to offer de resolution dat we all gib t'ree cheers fo' Mr. Pepper!

[*Cheers given with a will.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *Christmas morning.*

SCENE: *Same as Act I. During first part of scene, the troupe, all but PEPPER and TIM, are very busy arranging tent for their special performance. BARNEY and DUTCH move mess-table to [R.], cover it with red cloth, and set two boxes upon it as seats for the guests of honor. BEN and JERRY bring in a gymnasium mattress and a small low platform, which they arrange [Center], covering it with a bright-colored cloth. HARRY, JACK, and MIKE set soap-boxes with boards for seats at back of stage.*

BARNEY. Did yez iver see annything loike the change in the Boss?

BEN. I jes' lay awake half de night studyin' 'bout it.

JERRY. I tell you, he's just treatin' those two kids white, he is.

JACK. First time ever, for *him*.

MIKE. I'm just shtruck doomb, I am. Says I to me-self, says I, "There's magic in ut."

DUTCH. Nein,—it's dot little Christmas Tree vot doos ut.

HARRY. Well, h'anyway, 'e's h'evidently 'ad a change of 'eart. 'Ow's the kids this morning?

BEN. Fine as silk! I war expectin' to fin' 'em all tuckered out, but not a bit of it, sir! Dey's sharp as persimmons. Don' seem lak dey could a-walked all dat way widout no lift.

BARNEY. Did yez tell them about the show, thin?

DUTCH. Ve did, und dey're so oxzited dot it seem like dey'd shump out o' deir shkins.

JERRY. Have they heard of the tree?

BEN. No. Mr. Pepper, he say, don' let on—keep dat fer er s'prise.

DUTCH. Und since deir folks iss such heathens—dey ain'd t'inkin' 'bout noddings like dot.

JACK. Hustle up—you talk too much. The kids' folks'll be here after them if you don't get a move on.

MIKE [*gazing with pride at the result of their labors*]. It's a foine soight, sure.

HARRY [*leading the way to the tent door*]. Come along, fellows—it looks to me as 'ow we're ready. 'Oo'll be the 'erald an' tell 'em we're comin'?

[*Exeunt all but DUTCH.*

DUTCH [*goes to footlights and speaks to the piano*]. If der bant vill blees be so kint und blay a chune fer der grant marsh! [*Exit. After a moment enter DUTCH and BEN with the children, SONNY hanging to BEN'S hand and dancing with excitement. They are lifted into place.*]

BEN. Now, den, honey, you-all's gwine to see der circus, sho' 'nuff.

DUTCH. So! Is you gomf'table?

[*Exeunt BEN and DUTCH.*

BUB. Oh, Sonny, we're goin' to have a circus all to ourselves.

SONNY. It's better than just comin' in like other folks, isn't it, Bub?

BUB. Oh, lots! I guess it's a sure enough Christmas, too, Sonny. [*He rocks to and fro with delight. The piano plays a gay, quick march, and the Circus enters,*

in procession, headed by PEPPER himself and ending with the dog. They march several times around the stage, then take seats on the boards. DUTCH suddenly catches up his tray, and goes about shouting his wares, with a great air of being very busy.]

DUTCH. Beanuts! Beanuts! Here's your fresh-roasted beanuts! Bop-corn! Bop-corn und beanuts!

JACK. How do you sell 'em, Dutch?

DUTCH [*incensed*]. You tink I would *sell* dem on *Christmas*? Vot you take me for, hein? Haf some—it's a bresunt. [*Passes them about, and then takes up his stand (R. front) just behind the boys. PEPPER steps forward and stands beside the platform. Makes a fine sweeping bow to the boys.*]

PEPPER [*with his best professional manner*]. Mr. Benjamin Franklin Simpson and Mr. Daniel Webster Simpson, we have the great honor to make you welcome to the most world-renowned, the most marvelous single-ring circus upon the face of this Terrestrial Globe—Pepper's Perennial Circus, so named because it never folds its tents from season's end to season's end. I, Gentlemen, am Peter Piper Pepper, the fortunate proprietor of this colossal assemblage of artists. The members of my Company have desired the honor of being presented to you personally before they exhibit to you their unparalleled skill. It gratifies me exceedingly to comply with this wish. [*Steps to side of platform and motions to troupe. As he calls them by name they step forward and bow, with flourishes.*] Gentlemen, allow me to present to you the distinguished, the glorious Signor Frencelli, and Signor Cocodilla, who have charmed the crowned heads of Europe. [*The clowns come forward and bow.*]

DUTCH [*sotto voce to the boys*]. Deir names is Barney O'Brien und Jerry Pickle, but dot wouldn't do for der bosters. [*Clowns sit down.*]

PEPPER. Gentlemen, you see before you the world-renowned Marco Brothers, known from the frozen North to the sunny South, for their skill and ability in acrobatic feats. One of them also is a famous bareback rider and performer of feats of equestrian valor. He has a further talent of which you will be given an example a little later.

[*HOPKINS and LIMBER JACK make their bows.*]

DUTCH. Dot's Harry Hopkins, und de big feller is Limber Jack. Dey yust bass for brudders.

PEPPER. Now, Gentlemen, our show has the distinction of possessing the great Mr. Barlow, the only native African minstrel upon any stage. Mr. Barlow is a prince in his own country, and indeed we esteem him a prince in whatever sphere he may adorn.

DUTCH. Dot's Ben Chackson, und he ain't crossed no vater vider dan der riffer. [*Makes a face.*] But ve makes it up to der peoples vat pays for der seats.

PEPPER. And now, Gentlemen, last, but not least we have the noted, the justly celebrated Professor Wormwood, whose successful methods of training the dog and the monkey until they are rendered all but human, have been copied the world over. Professor Wormwood, with his dog, Schneider, and his South American monkey, Jocko.

[*MIKE steps upon the stage with the dog and monkey, makes his bow, and admonishes them to do the same.*]

DUTCH. Dot's Mike McGinnis.

BUB. Have the dog and the monkey got some other names, too?

DUTCH. No,—dey don' need dem.

PEPPER. Gentlemen, our little entertainment is now about to begin. Professor Wormwood will give an exhibition of his clever animals.

[As each is called upon to do some little "stunt," he bows elaborately, and does whatever he has to do with a great deal of professional air, then returns to his place, as before. The little boys, after DUTCH's suggestion, applaud vigorously, and the rest of the troupe look on at each other's "acts" with condescending approval. These are given in the following order.]

1. Professor Wormwood and his animals.
2. Frencelli and Cocodilla in juggling feats.
3. Mr. Barlow, the minstrel, in a darkey story.
4. Limber Jack in acrobatic exercises.
5. Marco Brothers, Indian clubs.
6. Harry Hopkins (a) gives an exhibition of bare-back riding.
(b) as Mademoiselle Zarah, dances.
7. Song. Mademoiselle Zarah and Troupe.

[MIKE puts the animals through a number of tricks.]

DUTCH *[to the boys]*. Abplaud! Abplaud!

BUB *[puzzled]*. What?

DUTCH *[clapping hands]*. Abplaud! Dey mus' have abplowse!

[While the animals are performing, the canvas parts (R. front). Enter FARMER]

SIMPSON, *unnoticed by anyone save DUTCH, who watches him at first uncomprehendingly, then with suspicion. The farmer looks about in horror, craning his neck to see all that is going on. Shakes his fist at the Ringmaster, sees the children, and makes as if to grab them. DUTCH interposes his body with determination.*

DUTCH [*sotto voce, but decidedly*]. Vot you t'ink you do—hein?

FARMER. You gi'me those children!

DUTCH. You vaits. You don' gotta take 'em yet.

FARMER. They're mine and I've come to git 'em.

DUTCH. You is deir vater, hein? All right; you vaits. Shoost sit down und look at der show. [*Shoves him down forcibly on a convenient box or keg, then carefully stands between him and the boys. Children shout and applaud the animals. Farmer watches at intervals, and during each turn he rises as if to protest, and is emphatically set down by DUTCH. His resistance is more and more feeble each time, and his interest in the performers visibly increases, until at the end he actually stands looking open-mouthed over DUTCH's shoulder, even betrayed into applause. When he catches himself clapping, however, he stops short and clasps his hands behind his back. PROFESSOR WORMWOOD finally bows himself off.*]

PETER. I have the honor to announce Signor Frencelli and Signor Cocodilla in their great act.

[*Clowns come forward and bow, do juggling tricks, etc. Same business for the rest.*]

SONNY. Oh, Bub, I think our dad would like this, don't you?

BUB. I reckon he would, if he'd just ever come and see it. *[Clowns bow themselves off.]*

PETER. Gentlemen, the famous Mr. Barlow will now entertain you. *[Minstrel tells a darkey story.]*

BUB. Don't you wish he'd come and live at the farm, Sonny?

SONNY. Yes, I do. S'pose he would?

[Minstrel bows and sits down. All applaud.]

PETER. Now, Gentlemen, one of the Marco Brothers will show his marvelous strength and agility.

[LIMBER JACK turns flip-flaps, etc. Presently

HARRY steps forward and they swing Indian clubs, gayly decorated, to music.

Then LIMBER JACK takes his seat, and

HOPKINS takes the stage alone.

HARRY. Yer honors, I 'eartily regret that I cannot this morning give a h'exhibition of my famous bareback riding h'exploits, h'owing to the fact of our 'orses being h'otherwise h'occupied—*[confidentially]* a-h'eating their h'oats, ye know. But, h'anyway, I can make the h'attempt to show you 'ow it is done, with a h'imaginary 'orse. 'Ere, Mr. h'O'Brien, will you kindly h'assist me?

[BARNEY brings a chair without a back, and

HARRY, after pretending to quiet a mettlesome steed, mounts, and goes through all the motions of dashing about the ring bareback. He wears an intensely serious look, fixing his eyes as it were upon the horse's ears, cheering him on, leaping off and on, standing lightly on one toe, etc. The Ringmaster watches and cracks his whip, the music plays a light and quick air, the whole troupe rise and watch breathlessly,

bending in time to the music as if in time to a galloping horse. JERRY comes forward with a wand, and HARRY leaps over it. Then BARNEY brings a hoop, wound in gay colors, or covered with tissue paper, and HARRY springs through it. This is his culminating feat, and now the horse apparently slows down and stops, HARRY leaping off and making a low bow toward the seats of honor.

BUB [*applauding wildly*]. Why, I could almost see the horse!

[*HARRY retires to back of stage, and makes a quick change in full view of the audience, to a ballet skirt and a yellow wig. The clowns assist him to dress, hooking him up behind, and holding a mirror for the proper adjustment of the wig, etc.*

PETER. Gentlemen, having shown you his prowess as a bareback rider, Signor Marco will now be introduced to you in a new light. Our traveling arrangements being somewhat—ahem!—circumscribed, we have never been able to carry any of the fair sex with us upon our tours. Believe me, Gentlemen, such is the surpassing genius of Signor Marco that we have never felt the need of ladies, as I am sure you will agree. [*HARRY now comes forward with mincing steps and a coy smile.*] Gentlemen, allow me to present to you the celebrated artist, the far-famed and charming Mademoiselle Zarah! [*The troupe all bow with great enthusiasm to the transformed HARRY, who courtesies and smiles with all professional airs and graces. The music strikes up, and ZARAH dances. When the dance is ended, ZARAH bows*

again, and goes through the motions of catching bouquets from the troupe or audience.]

PETER. Mademoiselle Zarah, assisted by the whole troupe, will now favor us with a song.

[Popular song, adapted to the occasion by the use of Christmas words. The boys applaud long and loudly; the troupe, after making a general farewell bow, break ranks and gather around them. JERRY and BARNEY remove platform.]

SONNY. I'd like to go to a circus every day.

BUB. Don't I wish I could! Well, it's a fine Christmas present, anyway.

PETER. Did you like it?

BUB and SONNY. Oh, *did* we!

BUB. It was just right!

PETER. Can you think of anything that would be an improvement—for a Christmas celebration, you know?

BUB [*embarrassed*]. Well, Mr. Pepper—you see—we've always heard the other children telling about Christmas—and Christmas Trees—and we did wish we could see one. This is next best, you know—but we did wish we could see a tree.

PEPPER [*nods to clowns*]. Well,—I'm not Herman—nor yet old Santa Claus, but I guess I can do *this* trick. [*Waves his whip, and the two clowns suddenly throw back the canvas (back Center) and disclose a small tree, lighted and raised high, framed by the sides of the tent.*]

BUB [*claps his hands*]. Oh, is *that* what a Christmas Tree looks like!

SONNY. Oh, Bub, let's go and see it. [*They slip*

down from their places and slowly approach the tree. Farmer makes as if to seize them.]

DUTCH [*catching his arm*]. No, sir,—you waits shtill longer a leetle bit!

SONNY. Oh, Bub, look at all the pretty shiny things.

BUB. And candy, Sonny, and toys, and the star on top! [*The men fairly swell with pride.*]

BARNEY. Sure it's the best I iver did see, for a small one.

JERRY. Makes me feel like a kid myself—we always had 'em every year.

MIKE. It joost warms the very cockles of me heart.

HARRY. I'd 'ave you look at their faces—they're 'appy, all right. It 'as the circus beat h'all 'ollow for them.

JACK. Between the two, they'll not forget *this* Christmas!

BEN [*leaning over the children*]. Look at all dem C'ris'mas gif's, honey! Dey's every las' one fer you.

BUB [*disappointed*]. Not anything for anybody else?

SONNY. Not nothing for Ben? I likes Ben!

BUB. And Dutch, and everybody? [*The men are confused at this turn of affairs.*] Only for us? Why, we thought Christmas trees were for everybody. And they've all been so good to us!

PETER [*throwing himself into the breach*]. No, that's a big mistake, boys! There *is* something on that tree for them—something that says every man in this here show gets a whole week's wages for a Christmas present, and then he can get what he wants most!

[A moment's silence, then there is a great clapping of hands, and slapping of each

*other's shoulders, and all press forward
and shake hands gratefully with PETER.*

DUTCH [*to Farmer*]. Vot I tells you? No maitter how shtrict you goes for to be [*slowly, and with emphasis*], you cain't kills Christmas! Yust look at der liddle tree! Laist night ve all vas reddy to cut somebody's t'roat, und dis mornin'—Bresto! Shangch!—ve're de pest frien's efer. It's der Kinder, und der Tree, und Christmas! I tells you, der ain'd noddings like Christmas der whole world rount!

[*The Farmer, who has been unbending gradually, at last nods in hearty acquiescence. Music strikes up, and all sing "Christmas Song."* BUB and SONNY, *unmolested, climb up to examine the little tree.*

CHRISTMAS SONG*

Allegro

FRANK E. SAVILE.

1. The Christ-mas chimes are ring-ing out, A-

cross the val-leys sound-ing clear, And

* Courtesy of Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company.

A CANVAS CHRISTMAS

as the ech - oes float a - bout, Tell of peace and

The first system of music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The melody in the treble staff begins with a half note G, followed by quarter notes A, B, and C, then a half note D. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is placed above the treble staff.

Christ-mas cheer, With joy-ous voic - es bless the day,

The second system continues the melody. It includes a crescendo marking *cres.* above the treble staff. The melody features eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff continues with chords. There are repeat signs (double dots) at the end of both staves.

And with sounds of mer - ry cheer, Let us all keep

The third system continues the melody. It features a forte marking *f* above the treble staff. The melody includes eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff continues with chords. There is a repeat sign at the end of the bass staff.

hol - i - day For Christmas comes but once a year.

The fourth system concludes the melody. The treble staff ends with a half note G. The bass staff continues with chords. The system ends with a final double bar line.

2. Old Christmas comes with merry train,
Bringing joy and mirth again;
The chimes ring out the glad refrain,
"Peace on earth, good will to men."
Be many Christmas days in store,
May no sorrow soon befall;
To young and old, to rich and poor,
A merry Christmas to you all.

CURTAIN

NOTES ON COSTUME, SETTING, AND PRESENTATION

COSTUMES

PEPPER. Scarlet coat, khaki trousers, high black boots. Silk hat. He wears a mustache, and carries a long whip with a scarlet bow.

ACROBATS. (Hopkins and Limber Jack.) Long stockings, puffed trunks, and running-shirt, or under-shirt, dyed to match. White bathing-shoes, or "sneakers." Any colors may be used. Light blue for Jack, and yellow for Hopkins are effective. Hopkins's ballet dress is made of innumerable skirts of white tarletan, sewed to a low-necked and short-sleeved waist of same material as his trunks, bespangled with tinsel. This should be carefully put together and equipped with buttons and button-holes, to slip on over the acrobat's clothes, so that Hopkins's "lightning change" can really be made in the least possible time. Woman's light yellow wig (or, if the boy is fair, a dark wig), dressed in the extreme of style.

CLOWNS. Pierrot costumes. White with red spots, and yellow with blue. Faces whitened with the usual red marks. Heads bald and white. White soft Pierrot hats. They may provide themselves with "slapsticks," and other properties incidental to their tricks and jokes.

MINSTREL. Usual minstrel make-up. Black-face, large collar, gaudy tie and vest. Flowered or large-checked trousers and dress-coat.

DUTCH. Khaki hat and trousers, shirt-sleeves, velvet vest, stuffed to make him very rotund. Should be a short, roly-poly boy. He carries by a strap over his shoulders a tray with bags of peanuts, rolls of pop-corn, etc. (Which will probably need to be kept under lock and key until time for its use.)

ANIMAL-TRAINER. Dress suit and silk hat. Carries a riding-whip.

TIM. Red flannel shirt, old trousers, very old felt hat, boots. May double with

FARMER SIMPSON. Old overcoat and straw hat. Red hair and chin beard.

DOG *and* MONKEY. It is best to rent these costumes from a costumer, though, if preferred, close-fitting suits of brown and black canton flannel, with long tails, may be made, and the heads only, rented. Chain for monkey, leash for dog.

BUB *and* SONNY. Overalls, sneakers, and big straw farm hats.

SETTING

TENT. A most effective circus-tent can be made by fastening strips of unbleached muslin above the stage-arch, and sloping them down to a wire stretched five feet above floor at back of stage, then dropping straight to floor. Back the entrances to the other tents with more canvas, to represent a straight-sided passage.

THE CIRCUS PERFORMANCE

A great deal of liberty may be allowed here. This play having been written for a boys' club, the boys were

intrusted with the duty of working up the individual "acts," which they did very successfully, with a little oversight and revision from those in charge.

The tricks by the Dog and Monkey were seesawing, boxing with gloves, dancing, fighting a duel, etc., etc.

The Clowns introduced an "elephant walk," a race, juggling with balls, and other tricks.

The Minstrel collected the latest and snappiest stories he could find, and told them with zest.

The boys' own list of acrobatic feats, which will be understood by boys doing work in a gymnasium, was as follows:

1. Roll. Back and forth.
2. Roll and frog leap.
3. Short dive.
4. Long dive.
5. High dive.
6. High dive over man.
7. Weight-lifting.
8. Two-man dive.
9. Double roll.
10. Pyramid.

They also included turning flipflaps, walking on the hands, swinging clubs, etc. The Pyramid, at the end, was formed by the whole troupe, on hands and knees, the lightest boys on top, and at a given signal all fell flat on the mattress.

The bareback riding of Hopkins and the dance of Zarah are fully described in the text.

MUSIC

A good two-step, rapidly played, will serve for the galloping horse, and Zarah can adapt herself to any modern dance-music.

For this play a carol or hymn is not appropriate, but rather a jolly song embodying the idea of "Christmas comes but once a year."



MINTY-MALVINY'S SANTA CLAUS

PLAY IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS

HENRI LEBRETON.

ALPHONSE, his mulatto servant.

LAURA COURVOISIER, his sister.

LOUISE

ANNETTE } Her children.

PHILIP }

MINTY-MALVINY, a pickaninny.

MINTY-MALVINY'S SANTA CLAUS

Adapted from the story in *Wide Awake* by M. E. M. Davis.*

TIME: *Christmas Eve and Christmas morning.*

SCENE: *LEBRETON'S room in Madame Clementine's handsome lodging-house in the Rue Bourbon, New Orleans.*

NOTE.—The curtain falls for a moment, during the play, to indicate the passing of Christmas Eve and the coming of Christmas Day.

Curtain rises showing a comfortable room, strewn with a bachelor's possessions. [R.] a fireplace † with wood fire, brass dogs, a large armchair, and footstool on the hearth-rug. [L.], curtain indicates an alcove with a bed. Near curtain, an old-fashioned low-boy with toilet articles before the mirror,—military brushes, cologne, etc., etc. Lighted candles here, and also on each side of gilt mirror above mantel. Shaded lamp on center table, littered with books, papers, a box of cigars, ash-tray, etc. LEBRETON seated in the easy-chair. LAURA leaning over the back.

LAURA [*affectionately stroking her brother's hair*]. Oh, Henri, you can't guess how good it is to be at home again!

LEB. Oh, yes, I can! What do you suppose it has meant to me to have you and Louis and the children

* Used by courtesy of Colonel Thomas E. Davis.

† See note on Fireplace, p. 313.

wandering over the face of the earth all these months? I've been a lost soul without you, and your home to go to.

LAURA. Traveling's all very nice and interesting, but it does pall! I grew tired to death of it—I just pined to come home again, Henri. [*Sits on arm of chair.*]

LEB. And here you are at last, in time to save your poor old brother from utter desolation at Christmas time.

LAURA. Oh, but I wish the house had been ready for us—it hardly feels like Christmas anywhere but in the dear old place. But Louis said it wouldn't do to hurry the workmen too much.

LEB. No—they'd only make a botch of it. But you are comfortable here, aren't you?

LAURA. Yes, indeed—you've taken such nice rooms for us, Henri. It's just the sentiment of it, you know, and I oughtn't have spoken. And Madame Clementine does everything to make us feel at home and comfortable.

LEB. How about the service—are the maids attentive, Laura?

LAURA. Ask such a question about darkies just before Christmas? Henri, you are a dear old silly! Of course they are. And so many of them—I see a new one to provide with a "C'ris'mus gif" every day, I think. To-day I noticed another—not exactly a maid, that is, but a funny little oddity of a pickanniny who seems to live just to "fotch an' carry."

LEB. Yes, I've seen that little monkey—does she really belong here?

LAURA. I'm not sure—I must ask Madame Clementine about her. . . . Henri, if we are to make that call, I must get my things at once.

LEB. This is so cozy—do you think you *must* rout me out?

LAURA. Poor dear, his conscience has come home again! [*Rises.*] Yes, I think we really ought. I've been at home three days, you know, and the Percivals are such old friends, and Helen has been ill—— [*Goes to door.*] I'll only be a moment.

LEB. [*going to ring bell*]. Very well, Madame, I'm at your service. If you are my conscience, sis, you certainly manage to sweeten my duty.

LAURA [*laughing*]. That's just your flattery!

[*Exit. LEBRETON goes to find gloves. Enter ALPHONSE.*

ALPH. Did you ring, M'sieu Henri?

LEB. Yes. Get me my coat, Alphonse. Madame Courvoisier and I are going out for a while. [*ALPHONSE brings coat and silk hat, which he brushes, then helps LEBRETON into coat.*] I shan't be late. [*Goes to door.*] But maybe you've calls to make yourself? [*ALPHONSE puts on a conscious smirk.*] Well, you needn't wait for me—Christmas Eve, you know. [*Exit, putting on gloves.*]

ALPH. Thanks, M'sieu Henri. [*Looks about room, sees cane, which he catches up and hurries after LEBRETON.*] M'sieu Henri!

[*Exit. MINTY-MALVINY appears at door. Looks cautiously after ALPHONSE. Enters and minces about.*

M.-M. [*sings*]. De rabbit and de jaybird, dey fell out!

Walk jes' so!

De possum and de coon dey want ter know what erbout.

Walk jes' so!

[*Goes to window and looks out.*] Hit am plumb dark!

Old Santa Claus mus' be a-hitchin' up dem plow-mules o' hisn by dis time. My lan'! de white folks is havin' er good time, I 'low! [*Goes to fire and sits on a stool.*] Dem dolls, an' dem doll cheers, an' dem rollin'-pins in de show-winders is mighty fine. [*Sighs, and continues meditatively.*] Pow'ful scrumptious dey was! Dass de kin' o' C'ris'mus gif' whar ole Santa Claus gwine ter fotch ter all de white chillen in dis yer town in de mawnin'! Santa Claus ain't got no 'quaintance wid niggers, dat I knows on—lessen it am niggers on de sugar-plantations;—he ain't never hearn tell o' town niggers. My lan', whyn't de Lawd mek me white whilse He 'uz about it! Hit mus' be jes' ez easy fer de Lawd ter mek er white chile ez er black chile! [*Rests her head disconsolately on her knees for a moment. Suddenly, as a great idea dawns upon her, she lifts her head and claps her hands.*] Hi! I got it! [*Springs to her feet and begins to dance a double-shuffle with all her might, shouting.*] Sho's you bawn, I'ze gwine ter do it! I'ze gwine ter mek m'se'f er white chile! I'ze gwine ter do it, sho'!

[*In the midst of her wild dance, ALPHONSE appears in doorway, and stands transfixed with horror.*]

ALPH. [*furiously*]. Bête! W'at you do here, in M'sieu Henri LeBreton's room? Ah'm a-goin' to keel you! [*He darts after, and they dash about the room at top speed, MINTY-MALVINY always just out of his reach.*]

M.-M. I ain' 'fraid o' no French nigger lak you! [*She leads him a dance, but finally rushes out at door. ALPHONSE recovers his dignity, and goes to attend to fire. MINTY-MALVINY appears before door again, walk-*

ing up and down with mincing steps and singing with a meaning air.]

M.-M. De yallergater ax fer de jack-o'-lantern's light,

Walk jes' so!

Fer to go ter see his gal thoo' de swamp in de night,

Walk jes' so!

[ALPHONSE *listens, rattles irons angrily, then runs to door with poker in hand. MINTY-MALVINY promptly takes to her heels.*

ALPH. "Walk jes' so!" An' if you don't walk jes' so, I'll show you how, *gamine!* [*Goes about arranging room for the night. Lays LEBRETON'S dressing-gown and slippers by the fire, puts out candles on mantel, then goes to dresser, where he pauses to admire himself. MINTY-MALVINY slips in, a small brown paper bag in one hand and a very ragged stocking in the other. She hides behind the easy-chair, but manages to keep a sharp eye on ALPHONSE, with scornful mouth for his vanity. ALPHONSE struts complacently before the glass, moistens his handkerchief with his master's cologne, puts out the candles, goes to table, where he helps himself to the cigars, puts out light, and exit. MINTY-MALVINY comes out from hiding-place, makes sure he is really gone, and relights candles.*]

M.-M. [*with deep scorn*]. Dar! I knowed dat French nigger 'u'd steal! I gwine ter tell on him in de mawnin' de minit I get er chance. [*Sits down on her heels before the fire, screwing up her mouth and chuckling with glee.*] Now, now, I'ze gwine ter mek myse'f inter er white chile. [*Opens bag in which she carries a dab of flour, with which she proceeds to powder*

her face as liberally as the bag allows. Then she produces the stocking and examines it with care.] Co'se hit's holey, but den Santa Claus kin stuff er gob er candy er sumpn in de toe-hole, an' er bannanner, er o'ange, in de heel-hole, and some reesins er a'mon's in de res' o' de holes. [*She gets up to hang the stocking.*] Hump! dis is sump'n lak a chimbly, dis is! Santa Claus ain' gwine ter hu't hisse'f comin' down a stovepipe. Some white folks is funny. [*She catches sight of herself in the mirror above the mantel.*] My lan'! Kingdom come! I is tu'ned inter er white chile, sho'! An' ole Santa Claus gwine ter be fooled, sho' as I is er nigger! . . . Now I gwine ter scrooch down on de rug hyar an' watch. [*Settles herself comfortably.*] I gwine ter hol' my eyes open [*yawns aloud*] ontwel I see ole Santa Claus crope down dis yer chimbly. Den I gwine ter ax him howdy, an' den I gwine ter p'int out what I bleedge ter hev fer C'ris'mus. Ca'se I ain' gwine ter be er white chile fer nuffin. [*This with some energy, but she grows more and more drowsy.*] I gwine ter ax fer er wax doll lak whar in der show-winder, an' er cheer, an' er cradle—— [*MINTY-MALVINY falls asleep.*]

[*After a moment, enter LEBRETON, quietly. Turns on light, goes to dresser, sets down hat, and drawing off gloves, tosses them into it. Crosses to fire, and sees MINTY-MALVINY. Stirs her gently with his foot.*]

LEB. [*not unkindly*]. Here, you little imp, get up! What are you doing here? Who are you, anyway?

M.-M. [*springing to her feet, then falling on her knees on the rug*]. I ax you howdy, Mister Santa Claus! I hope you's feelin' pretty peart?

LEB. [*to himself*]. Oh, Mister Santa Claus, am I?

M.-M. [*hurriedly*]. I'ze name Mint—I'ze er white chile, Mister Santa Claus, an' I'ze name Miss Ann. I'ze er white chile sho's you bawn, Mister Santa Claus!

LEB. [*laughing*]. Oh, are you? And your name is Miss Ann?

M.-M. [*with assurance*]. Yes-sir. Law, Marse Santa Claus [*laughs hysterically and rocks herself back and forth on her knees*], I'ze mos' sho' dat I seed you clammin' down de chimbley jes' now! An' I has been settin' up all night jes' ter ax yer howdy, an' ter ax yer ter fotch me er gre't big wax doll lak whar in der show-winder, an' er cheer, an' er cradle, an' some cups an' sassers wid blue on de aidge lak whar ole Mis' had on de sugar-plantation whar me an' Mammy come f'um. An' dat stockin' whar I is done hung up, hit am pow'ful holey, I knows. But I ain't got no Mammy ter men' it, an' ef er gob er candy wuz in de toe-hole, an' er o'ange in de heel-hole,—oh, Mister Santa Claus, Marse Santa Claus, I is er white chile! Cross my heart, I is! [*Bursts into tears, as LEBRETON takes hold of the stocking and looks it over, trying hard to restrain his laughter.*] Oh, Marse Santa Claus! [*Wails.*] You is knowed all de time dat I wuz lyin'! I ain't nuffin but er good-fer-nuffin li'l' black nigger whar is name Minty-Malviny.

LEB. [*almost overcome with laughter*]. Now I am surprised!

M.-M. An' I ain' fitten fer ter hev no C'ris'mus gif'.

LEB. Hush! [*Takes off his light coat, pushes her down on the rug, and throws the coat over her.*] Lie down and go to sleep. [*With mock sternness.*] If you're not asleep within two minutes, I'll—— [*His threat ends in a growl.*]

[*MINTY-MALVINY sobs for a moment or two,*

but quickly falls asleep, breathing deeply and quietly. LEBRETON comes forward and stands perplexed.

LEB. Well, I reckon Santa Claus will have to call for help. Laura can't have gone to bed yet . . . I'll get her. [*Exit, returning almost at once with LAURA.*] That's good! Come in a moment.

LAURA [*anxiously*]. Oh, Henri, what is it?

LEB. [*laughing*]. A trifle! [*Puts his hand on her shoulder.*] My pack has given out, and I'm 'bleeged to have a big wax doll, like whar in de show-winder, and a cheer, and some dishes, lak ole Miss's on de plantation; and all for a 'spectable young cullud pusson named Minty-Malviny!

LAURA [*mystified*]. Henri! I don't understand.

LEB. No, but you will in a moment. See what I found when I came in. [*Leads her over to rug, lifts corner of coat, and discloses MINTY-MALVINY fast asleep.*] Isn't this your little waif, Laura?

LAURA. Yes. But what in the world has she been doing to herself?

LEB. Sh-sh! Don't waken her! [*They speak in lowered voices.*] Why, she was waiting for Santa Claus, and her past experience of the old gentleman's impartiality seems to be responsible for an experiment. Anyway, she popped up and assured me that she was er white chile sho's I was bawn, and her name was Miss Ann. But it stuck in her throat——

LAURA [*laughing*]. No wonder!

LEB. And she presently broke down and wailed that she warn't fitten ter hev no Christmas gift. Now, do you suppose you can find anything for her?

LAURA. Certainly I can, poor little soul. Such a

lot of things have come—ever so much more than the children need. I'll look them over. [*Going.*]

LEB. Wait a minute—have you any fruit in your rooms?

LAURA. Yes—a whole dish. I'll bring it. [*Exit.*]

LEB. [*rummaging about on dresser*]. Er gob er candy fer de toe-hole. Ah—this will do nicely. [*Finds box of candy. Enter LAURA with fruit.*]

LAURA. Here, Henri, fill her stocking with these. I'll get some toys. [*Exit. LEBRETON takes dish, and sits down to fill stocking.*]

LEB. [*working busily*]. Er gob er candy—there, that's it. An' er o'ange fer the heel-hole. Good! Here are the nuts an' reesins for all the other holes—and bananas for the leg! [*Enter LAURA. LEBRETON holds up stocking proudly for her inspection.*] There! I flatter myself I'm good at the business, though you may say that that leg is hardly as fat as Minty-Malviny's own.

[*LAURA laughs approval, and busies herself arranging doll in armchair, with other toys about her. LEBRETON tries to hang stocking.*]

LEB. Oh, hang it!

LAURA. What, the stocking?

LEB. Yes—no—yes, that's exactly what I can't do! Come and help me, will you? [*They struggle with it together, making some noise.*]

LAURA. Hush, Santa Claus, you'll wake her! [*The stocking is hung, the toys arranged, they stand surveying the display, and putting last touches.*]

LEB. Oh, Laura, this is gorgeous! But you mustn't be too generous.

LAURA. Nonsense, the children will never miss them. [*They stand looking down at the coat. LAURA lifts the edge and kneels beside MINTY-MALVINY.*] She's too funny—poor little monkey! Oh, Henri, when we are back in our own home, I should like to take this poor little neglected thing and give her a home and look after her a little. Do you suppose I could?

LEB. I don't see what's to prevent. She looks perfectly friendless. [*They rise and go to door.*]

LAURA. You are a good heart, Henri.

LEB. The good heart is yours! I'm Marse Santa Claus—and I intend to put Minty-Malviny in your stocking! [*Both laugh heartily, but quietly, and exchange good nights. LAURA goes. LEBRETON comes back, standing at table a moment.*]

LEB. I believe I rather envy the old gentleman! [*Puts out light and goes towards alcove, his dressing gown thrown over his arm.*]

[*Curtains are drawn for a moment, to indicate the passing of the night. When they open, daylight has come, the fire is dim, MINTY-MALVINY is waking.*]

M.-M. [*catching sight of toys, as she sits up and stretches*]. Ow! Wow! Wow! [*She fairly yells, beside herself with joy.*] Ole Santa Claus done come down de chimbly sho' 'nuff, lak I seed him! An' he done fotch me er wax doll, an' er set o' dishes, same ez ef I wuz er white chile! Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy, Lawdy! [*Jumps up and gets down stocking, feeling it, and peering through the holes.*] Er gob er candy in de toe-hole, and er o'ange in de heel-hole. [*Pauses suddenly, her arm thrust into the stocking.*] Lawd, I is glad I didn' try

ter stick ter dat lie about bein' er white chile whar name Miss Ann! [*Continues her ecstatic rummaging.*] My lan'! I jes' ez lief be er nigger ez er white chile! An' er heap liefer!

[*Enter ALPHONSE, with an armful of firewood. Stands horrified on the threshold, then rushes forward.*

ALPH. Ah-h-h-h! 'tite diablesse! va-t-en! I'm goin' to shake the life out of you, singe!

[*A boot whizzes past his ear, from the direction of the alcove.*

LEB. [*imperiously*]. Let her alone, you rascal! If you dare to touch her I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!

ALPH. [*obsequiously*]. Yaa-as, M'sieu Henri.

M.-M. [*maliciously, half whispering*]. Walk jes' so! [*Makes a face at ALPHONSE. Aloud.*] I'ze dat gem-plum's nigger whar is dar in de bade, an' I gwine he'p mek he fiah. [*ALPHONSE goes viciously to work to make the fire, frustrating MINTY-MALVINY's attempts when possible, snatching the poker away from her, etc. She is exasperatingly pleasant and superior.*] You ain' bresh de hearf. [*He does so, and gathers up the rubbish with one last grimace.*]

ALPH. [*at door*]. Singe! [*Exit.*

M.-M. [*tossing her head and chuckling*]. Dat French nigger don' dass say nuffin to me, no mo'!

[*Enter LEBRETON from alcove, tying the cords of his dressing gown.*

LEB. Good-morning, Minty-Malviny—Merry Christmas to you!

M.-M. [*bobbing little courtesies to him*]. Mawnin', Marse Henry—same to you, suh! [*Looks at him with*

puzzled half-recognition, head on one side, like a bright little bird.]

LEB. [*to himself, sitting near table*]. She's nearly sharp enough to know me! [*To her.*] Minty-Malviny, what are all those things? Where did you get them?

M.-M. [*diverted from her study, turns to the toys*]. 'Deed, Marse Henry, I didn't *took* 'em f'um nobody. Ole Santa Claus done come down dis yer chimbly an' fotch 'em heself.

LEB. You don't say so! How do you know he did?

M.-M. Done saw him, Marse Henry.

LEB. You did? Did he scare you?

M.-M. Laws, no! I'ze erspectin' him, co'se, an' I jes' 'membered ma manners an' ax him howdy, an' he gib me all dese gran' C'ris'mus gif's.

LEB. All those for *you*, Minty-Malviny?

M.-M. [*coming closer*]. Yes, Marse Henry, I is some s'prised myse'f. I didn't s'pose no li'l' nigger could hab no such gran' C'ris'mus—I 'lowed 'twar on'y fer de white folks. [*Squats near him, on the floor, hugging her knees.*]

LEB. [*aside*]. I 'low white folks do have the lion's share, myself. [*To her.*] See here, Minty-Malviny—where's your Mammy—who owns you, anyway?

M.-M. Laws, Marse Henry, ain' got no Mammy. She brung me in f'um ole Mis's plantation, an' den she jes' up an' lef' me.

LEB. Who takes care of you?

M.-M. [*with dignity*]. Takes cyah ob myse'f—don' need nobody to min' *me*.

LEB. Do you mean you earn your own living?

M.-M. Co'se I does! I runs a'rons fo' Mam' Dilcey—dat's you-all's cook—an' I does chores. An' Mam'

Dilcey she treats me pretty good—dat is, mos'ly. [*Rubs her ear reminiscently.*]

LEB. Where do you sleep?

M.-M. Oh, mos' anywheres. [*Sidles nearer to him.*]

I lak yo' hearf-rug fust-rate, Marse Henry.

LEB. Oh, you do? [*Aside.*] Part of the C'ris'mus gif', I suppose. [*To her.*] Well, Minty-Malviny, my sister, Mrs. Courvoisier, is here now. In a few weeks she will be going to her own home—a fine great house, with a big garden—more like your ole Mis's plantation, you know. How would you like to go and live with her, and wait on her, and help mind her baby?

M.-M. Dat do soun' mighty scrumptious! But—Marse Henry— [*looking at him shyly from the corners of her eyes*] ef it's all er same to you—I'd er heap druther be yo'r li'l' nigger. [*Suddenly turns and kneels at his feet.*]

LEB. [*taken aback, turns away and walks down stage*]. Well—this turn of affairs looks rather more like my sock than Laura's stocking! [*Turns to her again.*] But what about Alphonse?

M.-M. [*with concentrated scorn*]. Dat French nigger! Why— [*very rapidly*] he cain't eben mek a fiah!

[*There is a rush from the door. Enter the children, followed by LAURA. The children throw themselves upon LEBRETON with enthusiastic shouts.*]

CHILDREN. Christmas gift, Uncle! Christmas gift!

PHILIP. We caught you, we caught you!

LAURA. Merry Christmas, Henri!

LEB. I've no breath left to say Merry Christmas, you young'beards! [*Shakes them off, laughing.*] Unhand me, villains! I want to tell you something. There is

somebody else here. Minty-Malviny, this is my sister, Mrs. Courvoisier [*MINTY-MALVINY courtesies to them all, with little bobs of her head*], and these are my nieces, Miss Louise and Miss Annette. And here is my nephew, Master Philip Courvoisier. [*Sits down, with PHILIP on his knee.*] Children, when you go home, Minty-Malviny is going with you, to look after you, and play games, and tell stories.

PHILIP. Can she tell stories? Oh, goody!

LOUISE [*aside*]. Oh, Mother, how ragged she is!

ANNETTE. Goody! I like stories, too!

LOUISE. Are those your Christmas presents?

PHILIP. Was your stocking just awful full?

ANNETTE. Just plumb full? Ours were.

M.-M. Yes'm, hit sho'ly wuz!

LOUISE. What nice things—did Santa Claus leave them for you?

M.-M. Yes'm. Ole Santa Claus done brung 'em, an' I never 'lowed he'd gib 'em to no pickaninny [*with lowered voice*], so I powd'ed myse'f up an' let on lak I'ze er white chile!

ANNETTE. You did! What fun!

M.-M. An' den he come down dat chimbly an' seed me.

PHILIP. Right down this chimney? [*Slips off LEBRETON'S knee, and runs to look up chimney. LEBRETON rises and stands by LAURA.*]

M.-M. Sho's you bawn, honey!

LOUISE. And you saw him?

M.-M. 'Deed I did, Miss Louise. [*The children gather close, and MINTY-MALVINY tells her story with effective drops in her voice, followed by sudden and startling crescendos.*] When he crope down dat chimbly,

an' sot he eyes on me de fust time, he knowed I wa'n't no white chile. Ca'ze he eyes uz big ez yo' maw's chiny plates! But he didn' keer! He jes' up an' tuk dat wax doll, an' dem dishes, an' dat cheer, an' dat table, an' dat cradle out'n de ba-ag whar he had on he back, an' gun 'em ter me jes' de same ez ef I 'uz white ez you-alls. But I mos' sho' dat he wouldn' er lef' 'em, ner stuff dat stockin' full er goodies, ef I'd er kep' on tellin' him dat lie about bein' er white chile whar name Miss Ann! My lan' [*this with an air of great virtue and pride*], I is glad ole Mis' l'arnt me to tell de troof!

PHILIP. What did Santa Claus look like?

LOUISE. He brings us things, but we never saw him.

ANNETTE. No, he always comes when we are asleep.

M.-M. Wa-al, he 'uz sump'n lak yo' Unc' Henry, on'y not er leas' mite gooder-lookin' dan Marse Henry, caze Marse Henry he de bestes' gemp'm'n on dis yearth! But he 'uz sump'n lak yo' Unc' Henry. 'Cep'n he's hade touch de top er de house! [*Makes a quick and startling motion with her hand and rolls her eyes.*] An' he voice big an' deep, an' growly lak a gre't big b'ar. An' de foot he kicked me wif, 'uz big ez de kitchen stove. [*Resumes her ordinary voice.*] Ya-as, chillen, ef Marse Henry 'uz mo' bigger, an' mo' higher, he 'u'd look jes' eszactly lak ole Mister Santa Claus!

CURTAIN

NOTES ON COSTUME AND PRESENTATION

Ordinary modern costume. LeBreton should have an iron-gray beard. Laura and her children daintily and attractively dressed.

Alphonse, mulatto servant, very dandified and vain.

Minty-Malviny, a black pickaninny, in rags and tatters, nondescript and faded. Her wool braided into little pigtails tied with odd bits of ribbon and string.

LeBreton, Laura, and Alphonse, by adults. Laura's children, five to nine years. Minty-Malviny, ten years old. This part could be played by a boy.

MUSIC. During the moment when the curtain is drawn for the passing of the night, "Holy Night," or some other well-known Christmas hymn, is very softly played off stage. LeBreton hums the same air while filling the stocking, and moving about stage before this interim.

THE HUNDRED

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS

MRS. DARLING, a young and pretty widow.

MRS. BONNET, the lady's maid.

CATHERINE, the parlor maid.

MRS. McGRATH, the cook.

SALLY, the kitchen maid.

TIBBIE, from the East Side.

THE HUNDRED

Adapted from the story by Gertrude Hall.*

TIME: *Christmas Eve.*

SCENE: MRS. DARLING'S *dressing-room. Dressing-table, with elaborate and glittering toilette articles, and a large and rather showy photograph of the late MR. DARLING, also a smaller one of MRS. DARLING'S cousin, the REVEREND DOREL GOODHUE. R., an alcove hidden by curtains, containing a couch on which repose The Hundred dolls. Stage requires two entrances, one communicating with MRS. DARLING'S bedroom, the other with the rest of the house.*

[*Enter CATHERINE, with two carriage wraps, which she surveys critically.*

CATHERINE [*sniffing at one of the wraps, with a sharp glance at the bedroom door*]. Humph. If there's the merest smidgeon of camphire about this, I'll hear from it! It's been airing 'most a week, too. [*Lays them carefully on couch or chair, then stepping softly, surveys the dressing-table and its appointments. Takes up newspaper from chair, and glances over it while expressing her sentiments.*] I'll just take this down with me till it's called for. What with Mr. Jackson the butler, and Sally the kitchen-maid always going home nights, and Cook slippin' off to her bloomin' family every chance

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she gets, it's likely to be lonesome for me this evening. I'll be bound Mrs. Bonnet'll be off with some friend or other, the minute Mrs. Darling's out of the house. Not that *her* company's over-pleasant. I'd rather stay alone any time. It's good luck for every other soul in the house when Mrs. Darling dines out. But *I* never come in for the extras.

[*Enter SALLY with fur-lined carriage shoes, which she places beside the wraps.*]

SALLY. Mrs. Darling wanted those warmed in the kitchen. I sh'd think all these fur fixin's 'd be warm enough without no stove.

CATHERINE [*sullenly*]. You going, too, I suppose?

SALLY. Why, yes. Ain't I done everything? There's no need of me staying, is there?

CATHERINE. No, I don't suppose there is. I just thought you might be, that's all.

SALLY. Tell you what I'd like to do!

CATHERINE. What'd you like to do, Sally?

SALLY [*confidentially*]. That's to come back again after I've been home for just a minute.

CATHERINE [*looks up, unable to conceal her interest*]. You don't mean just to oblige, do you, Sally?

SALLY. Well, I'd do it in a minute, for nothing else beside, but that ain't quite all I was thinking of, just this once. Miss Catherine—[*hesitates, then continues enthusiastically*—have you seen 'em in there? The whole hundred of 'em laid out in the alcove here. [*Draws back curtain a little, partly disclosing the couch with an array of daintily dressed dolls. They pick up one or two, and look them over admiringly.*] I saw 'em last night when Mrs. Bonnet she sent me up for the lamps to clean, and I've been thinkin' about it ever since. Law!

wouldn't any child like to see a sight like that! There's a little girl in my tenement, she'd just go crazy. Do you think there'd be any harm in it, if I was to bring her over and let her get one peep? She's as clean a child as ever you saw. She comes of dreadful poor folks, but just as respectable. She never seen anything like it in her life. Law, what would I have done when I was a young one, if I'd seen that? I'd thought I was dead and gone to heaven. I say, Miss Catherine, do you think anybody'd mind?

CATHERINE [*callously*]. How'll they know? Look here, Sally; you go along as fast as you can, and fetch your young one. And when you've got back, perhaps I'll step out a minute, two or three doors up street, and you can answer the bell while I'm gone. Now hurry into your things. I'll give you your car-fare.

SALLY. Miss Catherine, you're just as good 'as you can be, and I'll do something to oblige you, too, sometime. [*Exeunt.*]

[*Enter MRS. DARLING from bedroom in evening dress. Takes her cousin's photo from dressing-table and holds it at arm's length.*]

MRS. DARLING. Well, sir, does your charming cousin reach your standard of feminine appearance? Or is she still far from that pinnacle of elegance to which she aspires? She should be perfect indeed when she is to pose before the world as the highly-favored of the distinguished Mr. Goodhue. . . . And all the time, I know perfectly well that he prefers Quaker gowns, or hospital caps and aprons. . . . Well, I'm not exactly a lily of the field, but when it comes to Solomon in all his glory! . . . The morning papers will say so, at least. "The Reverend Dorel Goodhue, accompanied by his cousin,

Mrs. Darling," and so forth. Oh, sometimes I do grow so tired of it all! It's such a farce! . . . Now, this won't do at all. The Reverend Dorel Goodhue may preach to me on Sunday mornings, from a properly elevated pulpit, in a proper and decorous and conventional manner, but—— Just be kind enough to turn your reproachful face away, sir, and let your cousin finish her prinking. [*Replaces photo face down.*] Bonnet, why don't you come and do my hair?

[*Enter BONNET, slowly waving a hot curling iron.*

BONNET. Yes, Mrs. Darling.

[*MRS. DARLING sits before mirror beautifying her finger-nails, while BONNET curls a few straggling locks of hair.*

MRS. D. [*diligently polishing, murmurs*]. Mind what you are about.

[*BONNET removes tongs and catches the lock with greater precaution.*

MRS. D. [*louder, with a warning acid in her voice*]. Mind what you are about!

[*BONNET begins again, after a pause to make firm her nerve, catching the hair with infinite solicitude.*

MRS. D. [*almost screams*]. Mind what you're about! Didn't I tell you to be careful? You've been pulling right along at the same hair! Do consider that it is a human scalp, and not a wig—you are dealing with! Bonny, you're not a bad woman, but you will wear me out. Come, go on with it; it's getting late. [*She turns the photo face out once more, and after a moment, as if the sight of it made her repent, she rolls up her eyes angelically to the reflection of BONNET'S face in the*

mirror.] Bonny, do you think that black moiré of mine would make over nicely for you? I am going to give it to you. No, don't thank me—it makes me look old. Now, my fur shoes.

[BONNET *brings the shoes and begins to struggle with them.*

MRS. D. [*bracing herself against BONNET'S efforts*]. I suppose—I suppose I have a very bad temper! [*Laughs in a sensible, natural way.*] Tell the truth, Bonny; if every mistress had to have a certificate from her maid, you would give me a pretty bad one, wouldn't you? But I was abominably brought up. I used to slap my governesses. And I've had all sorts of illnesses; trouble, too. And I mostly don't mean anything by it. It's just nerves. Poor Bonny! I do treat you shamefully, don't I?

BONNET [*expanding in the light of this uncommon familiarity*]. Oh, ma'am, I would give you a character as would make it no difficulty in you getting a first-class situation right away; you may depend upon it, ma'am, I would. Don't this shoe seem a bit tight, ma'am?

MRS. D. Not at all. It's a whole size larger than the old ones. If you would just be so good as to hold the shoe-horn properly. There, that is it. [*Rises and stands surveying the two wraps.*] Which shall I wear? [*BONNET draws back for a critical view, but dares not suggest unprompted.*] The blue is prettier, but the gray with ermine is more becoming. Oh, Bonny, decide for me quickly, like a tossed-up penny!

BONNET. Well, I think now I should say the blue one, ma'am.

MRS. D. [*musings*]. Should you? But I look less well in it. Surely I would rather look pretty myself than

have my dress look pretty, wouldn't I? Give me the gray, and hurry. Mr. Goodhue will be here in a second. . . . Bonnet, you trying creature! Didn't I *tell* you to put a hook and eye in the neck of this? Didn't I *tell* you? *Where* are your ears? *Where* are your senses? What on *earth* do you spend your time thinking about, I should like to know, anyway? I wouldn't wear that thing as it *is*, not for—not for—— Oh, I'm tired of living surrounded by fools! Take it away—take it away! Bring the other one. . . . Now, button my gloves. [*Looks at herself in the glass, passively letting BONNET take one of her arms to button the glove. Murmurs.*] Ouch! Go softly; you pinch! [*BONNET changes her method, and pulls very gently. Louder.*] Ouch! You pinch me! [*BONNET stops short, looks helplessly at the glove, casts up her eyes as if appealing to heaven, then tries again.*]

MRS. D. [*screams*]. Ouch, ouch, ouch! You pinch like anything! I'm black and blue! [*Tears her arm from the quaking BONNET, fidgets with the button, and pulls it off.*] Bonnet, how many times must I tell you to sew the buttons fast on my gloves before you give them to me to put on? . . . No, they were not! [*Pulls off the glove and throws it far across the room. A knock at the door.*]

MAN'S VOICE [*respectfully*]. Mr. Goodhue is below, ma'am.

MRS. D. [*humbly, like a child reminded of its promise to behave*]. Get another pair, and let me go. [*Tucks a final rose, or bunch of violets into the bosom of her dress, turns to leave the room, then pauses to draw back the curtains and look at the dolls. Speaks gushingly.*] Aren't they lovely, the hundred of them? Did you ever

see such a sight? One prettier than the other! I almost wish I were one of the little girls, myself!

BONNET. Them that gets them will be made happy, surely, ma'am. I suppose it's for some Christmas Tree?

MRS. D. They are for my cousin Dorel's Orphans. Pick up, Bonny. Open the windows. Mind you tell Jackson to look at the furnace. I shall not be very late—not later than twelve. [*Exit.*]

[BONNET moves briskly about, straightening the room, with no affectation of soft-stepping. She digresses from her labors to get a black skirt from the bedroom, which she examines critically, then replaces. A knock.]

MAN'S VOICE [*only a shade less respectful than before*]. Miss Pittock is waiting below, ma'am.

BONNET. Very well, I'll be down directly. [*Exit, and re-enter at once with a rather old-fashioned cloak and bonnet, which she dons before the glass.*] I hope I haven't kept Miss Pittock waiting. [*Looks contemptuously at her wrap.*] She looks quite more than the lady in her mistress's last year's cape. They say the shops is a sight to behold this year—I haven't a minute to get a look at them myself—and it do seem as if people made more to-do about Christmas than they used. I wonder what kind of shops Miss Pittock'll fancy most. I'd rather see the show-windows in the Grand Bazaar first. They do have the most amazing show there. Anyway, we've got plenty of time. Her lady won't be home before twelve, and no more will mine. [*Turns down gas, and exit.*]

[*Enter CATHERINE, in a coat, with jet span-gles and a hat with nodding plumes.*]

Turns up gas, and looks about her while drawing on a pair of tight gloves. Enter SALLY and TIBBIE in outdoor wraps, shawls, and "comforters."

SALLY. Oh, Miss Catherine, I didn't know where you was. I thought maybe you was gone.

TIBBIE [*hanging back*]. You didn't tell me! You didn't tell me!

CATHERINE. Now you'll be sure she don't touch anything, Sally. [*Looks TIBBIE over.*]

SALLY. Naw! She won't hurt anything. I've told her I'd skin her if she did.

CATHERINE. Are her hands clean? You'd better give them a wash, anyhow.

[*TIBBIE drops her eyes, a little mortified.*]

SALLY. All right. I'll wash 'em.

CATHERINE. Did she scrape her boots thoroughly on the mat before she came up?

SALLY. I looked after all that, Miss Catherine. Just you go along with an easy mind.

CATHERINE. Well, I'm off. I won't be long gone. Why don't you give her a piece of that cake? It's cut. But don't let her make any crumbs. Here, give me your things. I'll take 'em down to the kitchen. Good-by, little girl. I guess you never was in a house like this before. Good-by, Sal. Is my hat on straight? [*Exit with coats.*]

SALLY. She's particular, ain't she?

TIBBIE. I'd just as soon wash them again, but they're clean. I thought you said she was gone off to a party, and going to be gone till real late.

SALLY [*plumps down to contort herself in comfort*]. Law! She thought it was Mis' Darling herself! Law!

Law! [TIBBIE *laughs, too, but less heartily.*] Now what'll we do first? Do you want the treat right off?

TIBBIE. Oh, lemme guess, first, Sal, and tell me when I'm hot! Is it made of sugar?

SALLY. No, it ain't.

TIBBIE. But you said it was a treat, didn't you, Sally?

SALLY. I did that. But ain't there treats and treats? There's goin' to the circus, for instance. That hasn't any sugar.

TIBBIE. Is it a circus, Sally? Is it a circus?

SALLY. No, it ain't a circus, but it's every bit as nice.

TIBBIE. Is it freaks, Sally? Oh, tell me if it's freaks! It isn't? Are you sure I'll like it very much? It's nothing to eat, and it's nothing I can have to keep, and it's not a circus. What color is it? You'll answer straight, won't you?

SALLY. Oh, it's every color in the world, and striped, and polka-dotted, and crinkled, and smooth. There's a hundred of it.

TIBBIE [*rapturously*]. Oh!

SALLY [*takes her hand*]. Come along now, I'm going to wash your hands in Mrs. Darling's basin. Ain't it handsome? [*Pokes the scented soap under the nose of TIBBIE, who sniffs delightedly.*] Flowers on the chiny, too. [*Washes TIBBIE's hands while they talk.*] Did you get anything for Christmas yet, Tibbie? [*TIBBIE moves her head slowly up and down, absorbed in the process of washing.*] What did you get?

TIBBIE. A doll's flatiron an' a muslin bag of candy. I put the iron on to heat and it melted. I gave what was left to Jimmy.

SALLY. Who gave them to you?

TIBBIE. Off the Sunday-school tree. But there

weren't no lights on it because it was daytime. Sally, I know something that has a hundred——

SALLY. What's that? Let's see if you've got it now?

TIBBIE [*shamefacedly*]. A dollar—is a hundred cents.

SALLY. Well, and would I be bringing you so far just to show you a dollar? This is worth as much as a dollar, every individual one of them. Tibbie, it's just the grandest sight you ever seen—pink and blue and yellow and striped——

TIBBIE [*after looking her fixedly in the face, now almost shouts*]. It's marbles!

SALLY. Aw, but you're downright stupid, Tibbie! I don't mind telling you I'm disappointed. You're just a common, everyday sort of a young one, with no idear of grandness in your idears, at all! And you don't seem to keep a hold on more than one notion at a time. First it's a dollar. Is that pink and blue? And next it's marbles. Is marbles worth a dollar apiece? Now tell me what's the grandest, prettiest thing ever you saw——

TIBBIE. . . . Angels.

SALLY. D'you ever see any?

TIBBIE. In the church-window, painted.

SALLY. Well, this is as handsome as a hundred angels, less than a foot tall, all in new clothes, with little hats on.

TIBBIE. Sally, I think I know, now. Only it couldn't be that. There couldn't likely be a hundred of them altogether, for it isn't a store you brought me to! You didn't tell me we were going to a store.

SALLY. No more it is. We're going to stay right here in Mrs. Darling's house, and no place but here.

TIBBIE [*faintly, looking all about*]. But where is there a hundred of anything?

SALLY. Oh, this ain't it, yet! This is only like the

outside entry. Now, Miss Tibbs, what kind of scent will you have on your hands?

TIBBIE. Oh, Sal!

SALLY [*at dresser*]. Shall it be Violet, or Roossian Empress, or—what's this other?—Lilass Blank? or the anatomizer played over them like the garden hose? [*They unstop the bottles in turn, and draw up great, noisy, luxurious breaths.*]

TIBBIE. This, Sally, this one with a double name, like a person. [*SALLY pours a drop in each hand, and TIBBIE dances as she rubs them together.*] Why are the little scissors crooked? [*Busily picks up things one after the other*]. What for is the fluting-irons? What for is the butter in the little chiny jar? What's the flour for in the silver box? Oh, what's this? Oh, Sal, what's that?

SALLY. It's to make you pale. It ain't fashionable to be red. [*Picks up powder-puff, and gives TIBBIE, who draws back startled and coughing, a dusty dab on each cheek, then applies it to her own. The two stand gazing in silent interest at themselves in the mirror, gradually breaking into smiles. SALLY suddenly hitches first one shoulder, then the other, and brushes her face clean, TIBBIE faithfully aping her movements. Then they look at themselves again.*]

TIBBIE. But I ain't pale, anyhow.

SALLY. Law! that you ain't!

TIBBIE. Who's the 'gentleman, Sal, in the pretty frame?

SALLY. That's Mrs.'s husband. He ain't been living some time.

TIBBIE. Oh, he ain't living.

SALLY. Now, Tibbs, I'm going to get you that cake before I show you the Hundred. You wait here. But

don't you hurt anything, or I'll skin you sure, like I told Miss Catherine. And whatever you do, don't you look behind that curtain till I come back.

TIBBIE. Is the Hundred there?

SALLY. Yes, it's there. [*Exit.*]

[*TIBBIE looks at the curtain for a moment, then turns to examine other wonders. Strokes the soft cushions, etc., with the palm of her hand, which she frequently stops to smell. Gazes at the photo of the REVEREND DOREL.*]

TIBBIE. He looks like a real kind, good man. I'm going to ask Sally if she knows him. [*Sits down on the floor and strokes the fur rug. Enter SALLY with cake-box. TIBBIE chooses gravely, then speaks with her mouth full.*] I never tasted any cake like this before. M-m-m-m! Say, Sally, this big thing's 'most as good as a dog. It's so soft I'd like to sleep on it.

SALLY [*with feigned coldness*]. Oh, all right! I don't think we'll bother any more about seeing The Hundred.

TIBBIE. I had forgotten, honest, Sally.

SALLY. Eat your cake, and come along, then.

TIBBIE [*jumping up*]. Can't I take it, in my hand?

SALLY. No, for when you see 'em, you'll drop it quick all over the floor.

TIBBIE [*hurrying it down*]. All right. I will.

SALLY. Wait a minute. You turn your back, and I'll go and open the curtains. When I sing out, you turn around.

[*TIBBIE stands facing audience, hands clasped tightly in impatience.*]

SALLY. Ready!

[TIBBIE gives one bound, then stops short quite overcome.]

SALLY [*expectantly*]. Well, ma'am? [TIBBIE *stands gazing, unable to speak.*] Well, I never! Don't you like 'em? What on earth did you expect, child? Well, I never! Well, if it don't beat all! Why, when I was a young one—— Why, Tibbie, girl—don't you think they're lovely?

TIBBIE [*whispers*]. Yes. [*Nodding her head slowly, then letting it hang.*]

SALLY [*understanding*]. Aw, come out o' that! Come, let's look at 'em one by one, taking all our time. Come to Sally, darling, and don't feel bad. We'll have lots of fun. [*Takes TIBBIE'S hand and draws her nearer the dolls, then sits on the floor and pulls TIBBIE down into her lap.*]

TIBBIE. I had almost guessed it, you know, when you said like angels with hats on. But I couldn't think there would be a hundred unless it was a store. What has the lady so many for?

SALLY. Bless your heart! They ain't for herself! They're for orphans in a school that a minister cousin of hers is superintendent of. She's been over a month making these clothes. Every Wednesday she would give a tea-party, and a lot of ladies come stitching and snipping and buzzing over the dolls' clothes the blessed afternoon. And I washed the tea things after them all!

TIBBIE. They are for the orphans. Are there a hundred orphans?

SALLY. Oh, I guess likely.

TIBBIE. Suppose, Sally—suppose there were only ninety-nine, and some girl got two!

SALLY. Well, we two have got a hundred for to-

night, Tibbie, so let's play, and glad enough we've got our mothers. Look, this is the way you must hold them to be sure and not crumple anything. [*SALLY slips her hand under a doll's petticoats, and they peep at the dainty underclothes. SALLY spurs on TIBBIE's enthusiasm by the tones of her voice, making the wonder more, to fill the child's soul to intoxication. TIBBIE easily responds, fairly rocking herself to and fro with delight.*]

SALLY. My soul and body! Did you ever see the like! [*Sighs.*] And not a pin among 'em. All pearl buttons, and silk tying-strings, and silver hooks and eyes; and, mercy on my soul! a little bit of a pocket in every dress, with its little bit of a lace pocket-handkerchief inside. D'you see that, Tibbie?

TIBBIE [*breathlessly*]. Oh, Sally! Oh, Sally!

SALLY. Come on, Tibbie; let's choose the one we would choose to get if we was to get one given us. Now I would like that one in red velvet. It's just so dressy, ain't it, with the gold braid sewed down in a pattern round the bottom. Which would you take?

TIBBIE. I should like the one all in white. She must be a bride; see, she has a wreath and veil and necklace. I should like her the very best. But right after that, if I could have two, I should like this other in the shade hat with the forget-me-nots wreath, and forget-me-nots dotted all over her dress. And, see! the sky-blue ribbon. If I could just have three, then I would take this one, too, with the black lace shawl over her head, fastened with roses, instead of a hat. She has such a lovely face! And after her I would choose this one in green—or this one in pink; no, this one here, Sally; just look—this one in green and pink. And you—if you could have more than one, which would you choose, after the red one?

SALLY. Well, I guess I should choose this one in white.

TIBBIE. Oh, no, Sally, don't you remember? That is the bride, the one I said the very first. You can have all the others, Sally dear, except the bride. But let's see, perhaps there are two brides. Yes!—no!—that is just a little girl in white, without a wreath. Should you like her as well? I was the first to say the bride, you know.

SALLY. Law! I wouldn't have wanted her if I'd known she was a bride! I take this one, Tibbie—this one with feathers in her hat. Ain't she the gay girl in red and green plaid? And this purple silk one, and this red and white stripe, and this——

TIBBIE. Wait! That's enough; Sally, that makes four for you. It's my turn now. If I could have five, I should take one of the rosebud ones—no, two of them, so's to play I had twins. Say, Sally, what if we could choose one apiece—first you one, and then me one, till we'd chosen them all up, and got fifty apiece!

SALLY. What if we could! Wouldn't that be just grand! Tell us some more you'd take.

TIBBIE [*pointing and speaking at first slowly and meditatively, then more and more quickly*]. I'd take this darling blue girl, and this yellow one, and this cunning little spotted one, and this, and this, and this, and this, and this—— Oh, Sally, if it was only real, and not just let's-pretend! Now it's your turn.

SALLY [*placing her forefinger pensively against the side of her nose*]. For my fifth one, I choose her—her with the little black velvets run all through.

TIBBIE [*promptly*]. Taken already.

SALLY. Then her over there with the short puffy sleeves.

TIBBIE. Taken!

SALLY. She taken, too? Well, then, her in the pink Mother Hubbard, with the little knitting-bag on her arm.

TIBBIE. Taken, Sally! Can't you remember anything? Those belong to me; I chose them long ago. These are the not taken ones over here; here, and here, and here, and here, and here, and here, and here, and—

SALLY. Aw, you're a great girl! [*Suddenly throws her arms around TIBBIE and casts herself back on the floor, where they tumble and roll in a frenzy of fun.*] Oh, Tibbie, ain't we having a time of it?

TIBBIE [*almost shouting*]. Yes!—ain't we having a time of it!

SALLY. Ain't this a night?

TIBBIE. Oh, yes,—ain't it a night! [*They tickle and poke each other until almost hysterical. At last TIBBIE disentangles herself from the panting and laughing SALLY, and gets up.*] Here, Sally, now stop laughing, and let's go on. It was your turn. You'd best take that one. She looks as if she might be a little girl of yours, her cheeks are so red—red as a great big cabbage! [*Laughs till she nearly cries.*]

SALLY. Well, it's sure none of 'em has legs to make 'em look like children of yours! [*At this TIBBIE flings out her thin black legs with the action of a young colt, and drops to the floor, where they frolic as before. In the midst of their gale of mirth, a bell rings. They sit up, and look at each other in silent consternation.*]

SALLY [*after a pause, in a solemn whisper*]. Murder!

TIBBIE [*in her ear*]. What is it?

SALLY. Was it the front door or the back door?

TIBBIE. I dunno, Sally. [*SALLY picks herself up, and casts a hurried glance on the dolls and about the room,*

to see if things are nearly as she found them, then turns down the light. Leads TIBBIE to bedroom door.]

SALLY [*glancing at clock*]. It ain't late. It ain't a bit later than I supposed. It can't be her! It might be Mrs. Bonnet, though, getting home before Catherine, who's got the key. I shouldn't want her to catch you here for the whole world. Look here, Tibbie. You stand in here till I find out who it is, and if it's Mrs. Bonnet, you'll have to stay hidden till I find a good chance to come and smuggle you down. [*Pushes TIBBIE through door, and exit by other door. TIBBIE very cautiously pokes her head out and looks around.*]

TIBBIE. What's that scratching? I know there's a mouse here somewhere. Go right away, mousie. There's nobody in here. Go right away!

SALLY [*without. Her voice calm, and pleasant with a kind of company pleasantness*]. Tibbie! It's all right. It's just a friend dropped in for a moment. You can play a little longer. Turn up the light carefully. But remember what I told you.

[*Enter TIBBIE at the first sound of SALLY's voice. Turns up the light, draws back the curtain in front of the dolls, and kneels before them. Takes up the bride with a reverent hand, and after long contemplating her, kisses her very seriously and tenderly. Then moves the dolls about to bring those she has chosen closer together.*]

TIBBIE [*meditatively*]. I can't play they are a family, there are too many all the same age and all girls. I will play they are a hundred girls in an orphan asylum—a very rich orphan asylum—and that I am the superintendent. To-morrow I'm going to give each a beautiful

doll for a Christmas present. This little girl's name is Rosa. That one is Nellie. That one is Katie. That one is Sue. And Mary. And Jennie. And Ethel, and Victoria, and Blossom, and Violet, and Pansy, and Goldenlocks, and Cherrylips—— Oh, dear, I know I can never name them all. There surely ain't enough names to go around and I'd just have to make up names for them. Kirry, Mirry, Dirry, Birry! These don't sound like anything. I wonder what they do every day in orphan asylums. They must have school and learn lessons, I guess. I'll be the teacher, now. Miss Snowdrop! [TIBBIE assists the dolls to move, and answers for them in a squeaking little voice.] "Yes, ma'am." Spell knot. "N-o-t." Not at all, my dear. Sit down again, my dear. Miss Lily; stand up, miss, and see if you can do any better this morning. Miss Pansy, I see you putting your foot out to trip poor Miss Blossom. Don't you do that again, child, or I shall have to stand you in the corner. Why, Rosy, how red your cheeks are! Don't you feel well? "No, ma'am." Never mind, don't cry. I must take you to the doctor's right away. Come, my dear. [Goes to dresser and looks in glass.] Good-morning, doctor. "Good-morning, ma'am" [in a deep voice]; "you've got a sick child there, I see." Yes, doctor, this is a young lady from the orphan asylum, and she says she's got a bad pain in her face. "Yes, yes. I see, I see. Well, we'll give her something to cure those red cheeks right up. Just come here, miss." [TIBBIE, as the doctor, powders the doll's cheeks very gently.] Very well. Good-by, doctor. "Good-by, ma'am. If she isn't better in fifteen minutes, let me know." Now, my dear, you needn't go back to school. The orphans might catch it. I'd like to rock you in my arms, but the superin-

tendent is too busy. . . . Oh, dear, I don't like to be a superintendent. I think I'll have you for my little girl [*draws forward a low rocker and carefully turns down light*], and get you some nice little sisters [*gathers a dozen dolls*], and then rock you all to sleep. [*Settles comfortably in the chair.*] It's bedtime, and you must be rocked and loved a little. Now, sh! Sh! Sh! Sh! What's that, Mamie? Sing to you? Very well. [*Sings.*] Rosie, what are you crying for now? You want me to rock faster? All right, I will. [*Rocks faster. Rosie continues to cry, and the rocking soon becomes furious. In the excitement one doll slips unnoticed to the floor.*] There, that's better. Now, children, do go to sleep. . . . Mother is sleepy herself. [*Rocking becomes slower and slower, and at last stops entirely. TIBBIE falls asleep. . . . Enter SALLY.*]

SALLY. Lively, Tibbie! Miss Catherine has got back. We must be packing off home. I declare I lost sight of the time. There's just no one like a fireman to be entertaining, I do declare. Mrs. Bonnet won't be long coming now. [*Turns up light, sees TIBBIE rubbing her eyes, and the dolls all disarranged. Blankly.*] Law! do you suppose we can get them to look as they did? I hope t' Heaven she didn't know which went next to which. Do you remember, Tibbie, where they all belonged?

TIBBIE. Yes, the bride went here. The rosebuds here. The purple and gray here. I can put them all back, every one.

SALLY [*cheerfully, again*]. No one'll ever know in the world they've been disturbed. [*Draws off to get general effect. Dives for the last doll, which TIBBIE sleepily hands up from the floor.*]

SALLY [*in a ghastly whisper*]. Tibbie! look at its

head! [TIBBIE gazes in a puzzled way. *The face is crushed.* SALLY groans.] Oh, Tibbie! now what'll we do!

TIBBIE [*truthfully, lifting a very pale face*]. I didn't do it! I was just as careful! She was one of my daughters. I had her in my lap, rocking her to sleep with the others; she slipped off my lap—there were too many for one lap, I guess—but I didn't step on her. Sure, Sally,—sure as I live, I didn't step on her!

SALLY. Oh, law! You must have rocked on her. Oh, Tibbie, what'll I do? Here, give her to me. . . . No, she can't never be fixed. I wonder if I can cover her up, here. [*Moves the dolls about tentatively.*] But what's the good? They'll count them, and there'll be the mischief of a fuss. Oh, Tibbie—[*reaching the end of her good-nature*—why did I ever think of bringing you here? Now look at all the trouble you've brought on me, when I thought you'd be so careful! And I told you and told you till I was hoarse. And here you've ruined all! [*Drops into a chair before the wreck.* TIBBIE, *not daring to meet SALLY's eyes, stands motionless and speechless.*]. I declare I don't know *what* to do! I wish I'd never seen 'em! I wish there'd never been any Christmas! Oh, it's a great job, this! Tibbie, you've done for me this time! [Enter CATHERINE.

CATHERINE. Hurry, and get off, now, Sally.

SALLY [*blurts out*]. She's broken one of them!

CATHERINE. You don't mean it!

SALLY. Yes, she has!

CATHERINE. Let me see it. Oh, you wicked child! [*Shakes TIBBIE vigorously by one arm.* SALLY, *attempting a rescue, seizes her by the other, and the poor child*

is jerked about unmercifully.] She's smashed its face right in! Now, whoever heard of such naughtiness?

[*TIBBIE escapes and twists about to get her back to the two.*

SALLY. She didn't do it out of naughtiness, at all, Miss Catherine. She's as good a child as ever lived! [*TIBBIE'S shoulders give a convulsive heave.*] It was an accident entirely. But that's just as bad for me—I suppose I shall have to say it was me did it.

CATHERINE. And then they'll say what was I doing while the kitchen-help was poking about in the lady's chamber. No; you don't get me into no trouble, Sally Bean! You'd much better say how it was—how that you asked me if you just might bring a little girl to look, and I said you might, out of pure good-nature, being Christmas is rightly for children, and I've a softness for them. And while we was both in the kitchen, she slipped away from us, and come here and done it before we knew. And the child will say herself that it was so. You'll be packed off, dead sure, out of this place, if you let on you meddled with them yourself. She won't have her things meddled with—— There! I hear the door now. There comes that old cat Bonnet.

[*Enter MRS. BONNET, her cheek bones and the end of her nose brilliant with the cold. She carries a paper bag, and speaks with an impediment and a breath of peppermint.*

BONNET. What's the matter? What child is that?

CATHERINE. It happened this way, Mrs. Bonnet. I allowed Sally to fetch this child up to see Mrs. Darling's dolls.—Just for a treat, of course—never thinking Sally'd be so careless as to let one of them get broken. But that's what she done. I'd just stepped out for a moment, never

for a minute supposing anything like this could happen, but you just see for yourself. That doll can't be mended no way at all. And now, Mrs. Bonnet, what's to be done?

BONNET. Oh, you wicked little brat! I just want to get hold of you and shake you! [*Makes a snatch at TIBBIE, who gets beyond her clutch, and turns scared eyes on SALLY.*]

TIBBIE [*just audibly*]. I want to go home; I want to go home.

BONNET [*bitterly*]. It don't seem possible that I can run out a minute just to do an errand for Mrs. Darling herself—to get a spool of feather-stitching silk—but things like this has to happen. Catherine, I thought you at least was a responsible person, and here you has to go and——

CATHERINE [*promptly*]. Mrs. Bonnet, you just let that alone! Don't you try none of that with me! I went out of an errand every bit as much as you did. I went out to make sure the ice cream would be sent in good season for Christmas dinner, I did. Now I don't get dragged into this mess one bit more than you do!

BONNET [*looking at her with a poison-green eye*]. Well, Mrs. Darling will be here in a minute, and then we shall see what we shall see. Land, ain't that woman been cross to-day, and fussy! 'Tain't as if she was like other people—a little bit sensible, and could take some little few things into consideration, and remember we're all human flesh and blood. Not much! She don't consider nothing, nor nobody, nor feelings, nor circumstances! She just makes things fly! Things has to go her way, every time!

TIBBIE [*pathetically, turning a trembling face to SALLY*]. I want to go home!

BONNET [*uglily*]. No, you shan't go home! You shall stay right here and take the blame you deserve, after spoiling the face of that handsome doll. What do you mean by it, you little brat, you little gutter-imp!

SALLY [*with a boldness new in her relations with Mrs. Bonnet*]. You let her alone, Mrs. Bonnet! Don't you talk to her like that! Anyone can see she's as sorry as sorry can be for what she's done, and all the trouble she's got us into—— [COOK *appears in door*.]

BONNET. And what does that help, I'd like to know? The doll is broke, ain't it? And some one of us is going to catch it, however things go. You're a lucky girl, I say, if you don't lose your place. Some one of us is a-going to, I can easy foretell.

CATHERINE [*firmly, with lifted chin*]. I ain't going to lose my place! Here comes Cook now! I suppose she wants to get into trouble, too.

[*Enter COOK, her high-colored shawl pinned on her breast with a big brooch, her bonnet-strings nearly lost in her fat chin.*]

COOK. What's the matter? What's it all about? Whose nice little girl is this?

SALLY. I brought her here, Mrs. McGrath. She's Tibbie, a neighbor's child, and I brought her——

COOK. To see them beautiful dolls. Of course. And one of 'em happened to get broke? [*Goes to TIBBIE, and lifts her miserable little face.*] Don't you feel bad one bit, darlin'! It was all an accident, and it's no good crying over spilt milk. And if Mrs. Darling gets mad at you, she ain't the real lady I take her for. Why, I gave my Clary a new doll this very evenin' and it's ready for a new head this minute. And did I go for to rare and tear about it? Not a bit of it! Why, bless

you, she didn't go for to do it! Why, what child smashes a doll a-purpose? You're a pretty set, the whole gang of you, to pitch into a child! [*Tries, with SALLY, to comfort and silence TIBBIE, who by this time is freely weeping. Exit BONNET, and re-enter at once without hat and coat.*]

COOK [*looking hard at Mrs. BONNET*]. I've a great mind to stay here myself and stand up for her, yer pack of old maids, the lot of yer!

BONNET. You will oblige me, Mrs. McGrath, by doing nothing of the sort. We've no need to have a whole scene from the drama. You've no business on this floor, anyhow, and I must insist on your keeping yourself in your own quarters.

COOK [*mutters*]. And I'll take my own time, yer born Britisher! [*Putting her arm around TIBBIE.*] Well, Tibbie dear, you can be sure of this: however bad this seems, it'll soon be over. And if Mrs. Darling scolds, that'll soon be over, too. It'll all be looking different to you in the morning. However things goes, you'll soon be forgetting all about it. And to-morrow is Christmas Day, that our own dear Lord was born on, and I'll bake you a little cake and send it to you by Sally.

TIBBIE [*sobbing*]. But Sally's going to be sent away.

COOK. So she might be, but I feel it in my little toe that she ain't going to be.

SALLY [*bravely*]. Well, if I am, I am, and there an end. But I don't see why she can't take the price of the doll out of my wages and let me stay.

BONNET. I think you'll find that it ain't most particularly the cost of the doll gets you into trouble—There she comes this minute!

[*All listen in profound silence.*]

MRS. D. [*below*]. Good-night, cousin Dorel.

MR. GOODHUE [*below*]. Good-night, cousin Cynthia. Sleep well.

MRS. D. You, too. Pleasant dreams. Good-night.
[*Sound of door closing.*]

[*Enter MRS. DARLING. Stands a moment at door, regarding the assemblage with a sort of absent-minded astonishment.*]

MRS. D. What is it? Has anything happened? What is everybody doing up here? Whose little girl is this sitting up so late? They used to tell me I should never grow, my dear, if I sat up late——

BONNET. This is what it is, ma'am. I took the liberty of stepping out for a few moments, it being Christmas Eve and my work all done, knowing you wouldn't be needing me till late. And Sally here took it upon herself to bring a child—how she could presume so, I'm sure *I* don't understand, ma'am. She might have known aforehand something would be broken. And sure enough—when I come in——

MRS. D. Oh, cut it short! What you have to tell is that the child there has broken one of the dolls, isn't it?

BONNET [*mutters*]. That's it, ma'am.

MRS. D. And you've kept her here when she ought to have been in bed these hours, to bear the first burst of my displeasure—— [MRS. DARLING *says so much in a hard voice, with an appearance of cold anger; here her voice suddenly dies, and she bursts out crying like a vexed, injured child.*] I declare it's too bad! [*She sobs, reckless of making a spectacle of herself, while all look on in consternation.*] I declare it's too bad! It's no use! It doesn't matter *what* I do—it's always the same! It's *always* taken for granted that I will conduct myself like

a beast. Who can wonder, after that, if I do? Here I find them, pale as sheets, the five of them shaking in their boots, because a forlorn little child has broken a miserable doll. And *what* is it supposed I shall do about it? Didn't I dress the hundred of them for children, and little poor children, too? And I must have known they would get broken, of course. *Why* did I dress them? *What* did I spend months dressing them for? Solely for *show*, they think,—not for any charity, any kindness, any love of children, or anything in the *world* but to make an effect on an occasion—to make myself a merit with the parson, perhaps! [*Her crying seems to become less of anger and nervousness, and more of sorrow.*] Oh, it is too bad! One would imagine I never said a decent thing or did a kind act to anyone. And, Heaven knows it's not for lack of trying to change. But no one sees the difference! I am treated like a vixen and a terror. And the people about me hate and fear and deceive me! A proof of it to-night. Oh, the *lesson*! Oh, I wasn't *meant* for this! I wasn't meant for it! When I think of last Sunday's sermon and how straight to my heart it went. Oh, I am a fool to cry! [*Dries her eyes, and holds out her hand to TIBBIE.*] Come here to me, dear child. What is your name? What? A little louder! What did you say? Tibbie! Oh, what a nice, funny name! *You* didn't think I was going to scold you, did you, dear? Of *course* not! It was an accident; I understand all about it. I used to break my dolls' heads frequently, I remember very well. [*Puts her arm about TIBBIE and tries to make her head easy on her shoulder. TIBBIE, however, cannot relax, and rests uncomfortably against her.*] Let us see, dear, now, what we can do to make us both feel happier. I dressed all those dolls for

little children I am not acquainted with at all. Which of them would you like the very best? Which should you like for your very own?

[TIBBIE cannot move nor speak, but her eyes travel towards the dolls.

SALLY [*comes beamingly to TIBBIE'S aid*]. The bride, Tibbie, the bride!

MRS. D. The bride? Which one is that? That one? Of course! [*Reaches for it, and SALLY hands it to her.*] There, my dear. [*TIBBIE takes the doll loosely, without breath of thanks. MRS. D. reviews the dolls, and TIBBIE'S hand is stretched involuntarily towards the broken one.*] Of course, of course, you would want that poor dolly to nurse back to health. Now, dear, isn't there *one more* you would like? [*TIBBIE'S confusion overwhelms her.*] I'll choose one for you, and you shall call her Cynthia, after me. How would you like that? Suppose we say this one with the forget-me-nots? She looks a little like me, doesn't she, with her hair parted in the middle? Her dress is made of a piece of one of my own, and that blue is my favorite color. [*Rising.*] There, Tibbie, now you have two whole dollies, and part of another. You must run right home to bed. A Merry Christmas to you, dear child. I am very happy to have made your acquaintance.

TIBBIE [*shyly, but heartily*]. I think you are good—good. And, please,—I'd like—if you wouldn't mind—I'd like to kiss you!

[MRS. DARLING bends suddenly, and catches the child in her arms.

NOTES ON COSTUME AND PRESENTATION

MRS. DARLING. Evening dress.

BONNET and CATHERINE wear black, with white maid's apron, collar, and cuffs. Outdoor costume as indicated.

MRS. McGRATH. Shawl and bonnet with no attempt at prevailing styles. Stout, rosy, motherly, and comfortable.

SALLY. Pretty and wholesome-looking. Appears at first in a limp blue kitchen-apron, later in her outdoor coat and hat, neat, but cheap-looking.

TIBBIE. Old dress, very neat and clean, but faded, and with an outgrown, hand-me-down appearance. She is a thin and half-fed little tenement-house child, to whom the luxury of Mrs. Darling's house is an undreamed-of fairy-land.

This part was played by a little girl of nine, who delighted in learning and acting it. A bright and appreciative child can do it without undue effort, although it is, of course, the important rôle of the play.

THE DOLLS. The number of dolls need not be over fifteen or twenty, if so arranged as to suggest more tiers hidden from view at the back of the couch. They should be as nearly of one size as is practicable, though uniformity goes no further. The broken one should be broken first, and Tibbie must slip it to the floor unnoticed before she sits down to rock the others.

GENERAL NOTES

FIREPLACE. If scenery is not available, the fireplace used in this play, and in several others, can easily be built up from packing-boxes covered with cambric (dull side out), the bricks or tiles marked in black paint, or even with ink. A valuable and effective stage-property, used when "Tom's Plan" was first given, and in many subsequent plays, was an old-fashioned wooden mantel, obtained through a carpenter who was tearing down an old house. This may be a suggestion for other amateurs. A small screen can be covered with cambric, and painted to represent the back of the fireplace, an opening being left at one side, through which Santa Claus, in "Tom's Plan," "The Christmas Brownie," and "Their Christmas Party," makes his entrance. Andirons, with logs and a red electric bulb, will make a very pretty and effective fire. In "Their Christmas Party," the poor children hide in the fireplace, and the "Christmas Brownie" goes in and out several times.

SANTA CLAUS. Red or brown coat, trimmed with ermine (cotton, or, if practicable, some real fur); high boots; cap to match coat, with fur brim. He wears a string of sleigh bells over his shoulder, and carries a pack full of small toys for distribution. White hair, mustache, and long white beard.

In these plays, in which Santa Claus has often an important part, do not on any account allow him to wear a mask. The hair, mustache, and beard, with a good

rosy make-up, are sufficient disguise for him, and in those cases where there are little children in the cast whose literal belief in Santa Claus must not be disturbed, he is not indispensable at rehearsals. Partly because he should not be recognized, an adult player is always indicated for this part, rather than an older boy, who is apt to be in more intimate touch with the children.

CHRISTMAS TREE. If the play is to serve as introduction to a Christmas Tree, the tree should be placed as near the stage as possible. When the play is over, the lighted tree is unveiled, and the children who have taken part distribute the presents under the leadership of Santa Claus. Or, if found more practicable, the tree may be placed in another room, and Santa Claus may invite the children of the play and the audience to go with him in search of it. An appropriate tree song may be sung by the whole audience. Reference to such songs may be found on the following page.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CAROLS

SONGS AND GAMES FOR LITTLE ONES. Gertrude Walker and Harriet S. Jenks. Oliver Ditson Company, Boston.

Contains a number of useful songs and carols, among which the following may be specially mentioned:

“Oh, Ring, Glad Bells!” (P. 58.)

“The First Christmas.” (P. 60.)

Good for little children.

“Noël, Noël, the Christ is Born!” (P. 62.)

Excellent processional.

“A Wonderful Tree.” (P. 67.) Tree song.

SONGS FOR LITTLE CHILDREN. Part I. Eleanor Smith. Milton Bradley Co., Springfield, Mass.

“In Another Land and Time.” (P. 31.)

“Waken, Little Children.” (P. 33.)

Very simple. Good for small children.

PART II of the same contains Santa Claus and Jack Frost songs.

THE NEW HOSANNA. New-Church Board of Publication, 3 West 29th Street, N. Y.

Has a good tree song:

“The Christmas Bells in Many a Clime” (P. 4.)

For little children:

“Can There Be a Sweeter Story?” (P. 21.)

There are also a number of old English carols, among them:

“The First Nowell.” (P. 2.)

"Come, Ye Lofty, Come, Ye Lowly." (P. 23.)

"From Far Away We Come to You." (P. 30.)

Also several of the more familiar Christmas hymns to be found in most church hymnals.

For old music, see the following:

CHRISTMAS CAROLS, NEW AND OLD. Novello & Company.

TWELVE OLD CAROLS, ENGLISH AND FOREIGN. Novello & Company.

FOLK SONGS, AND OTHER SONGS FOR CHILDREN. Oliver Ditson Company, Boston.

The first and last of these both contain "Good King Wenceslas," which is included in other collections as well.

Martin Luther's Christmas hymn for his own children, which is very good for small children, beginning "Away in a manger," is in

DAINTY SONGS FOR LITTLE LADS AND LASSES. John Church Company, Cincinnati.







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1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the current situation and the goals that need to be achieved.

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